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BENEFITS FORGOT

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LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

BENEFITS FORGOT

A NOVEL

BY

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"THE AVERAGE WOMAN"
AND JOINT-AUTHOR WITH RUDYARD KIPLING, OF "THE NAULAHKA"

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1893

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RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED
LONDON AND BUNGAY.

BENEFITS FORGOT

CHAPTER 1

MAURICE did not leave him long in doubt. He congratulated him on his "strike" in the "Little Cipher," using the slang. He had heard of it from Cutter, he said. Was the assay as large as Cutter said?

Philip had begun to hate the word "strike"; and in his loathing for the congratulations which had pursued him since the first day, he was much further gone. The very conductor of his train from Bayles' Park had wanted to smoke a cigar with him on the strength of his strike. He had ceased to start at these felicitations, but they were irritating. If anything could have increased his grudge against Jasper for being the man to whom he must surrender the "Little Cipher" it would have been that the circumstances

of the case were things that one could n't explain to a man who wanted to smoke a cigar with you. It was a fact, if any one liked to put it in that way, that he was turning over to his brother a mine to which Jasper had no claim save such as existed in one conscience; but it was n't the sort of fact that one could mention as one observes that it rains.

It was impossible—he said this to himself when he found that he was not denying Maurice's congratulations in the first instant of hearing them—that he should expose his motives to the comment of every mind he met on his way to Jasper. It was n't decent; and, at all events, would be intolerable. Yet, in the next moment, he saw that though Maurice was the last man to whose eye he should care to submit the spectacle of his moral processes, he must tell him. The moment lengthened, however, and he did not tell him.

As the gate slammed behind them and they stood in Maurice's front yard, Philip felt again that he must speak. It came upon him with renewed force that Maurice had a right to know; and that he should be wronging him in keeping silence. Maurice stood in an entirely different relation to the fact from any one else he had met since he knew it himself. To keep silence in Piñon, or before his

conductor, might be a matter of taste : but not to tell Maurice was a kind of fraud, perhaps.

He had opened his lips on the doorstep, with no notion of the way in which he should begin, when Dorothy appeared at the bay window which jutted out into her flower-bed in the yard. Philip had a vision of a black skirt and an electric blue blouse on amiable terms with the fair face above it. She waved her hand gaily to her father with a gesture in which Philip might include himself or not, as he liked. It seemed a very long time since they had spoken together; it was a fortnight since he had seen her. The apparition at the window filled all his senses. He did not go on with what he was saying.

The stainless white brow of Ouray, visible from the doorstep, fantastically seemed to be wrinkling itself in reproach as he went in with Maurice.

Maurice opened the door into the parlour far enough to say to Dorothy that Mr. Deed would stay to luncheon with them, and to ask when it would be ready ; and then led the way upstairs to his own bed-chamber, where Philip got rid of the railway dust, and did what he could by way of freshening the effect of the miner's dress in which he had

hastily set out for Piñon, a fortnight before, lacking one day. He wondered how she would receive him. He braced himself for the reception which he feared, and which he felt he had probably earned.

She received him, however, as he might have guessed, as a hostess, not as a woman. Her expressionless cordiality, her meaningless courtesy daunted him. He would rather have been snubbed outright. Her father, who had taken up his stand with his back to the wood fire in the grate, smiled on the meeting. A moment later he was called from the room by information from the servant that his sexton, Sandy Dikes, was waiting to speak with him.

"Miss Maurice——!" began Philip, entreatingly, as the door closed behind her father.

She stopped him to ask if the room was not too hot for him. Philip was going hot and cold by turns; but the temperature was not at fault. He said it was not too hot for him, unless— "Oh no," she shook her head.

Her smooth tones, her conventional smile of good society began to madden Philip. He felt like an unpractised skater slipping impotently about on new ice.

The passive *rôle* assigned to women, which laid them

under so many disadvantages, certainly had its moments of triumph; Philip wondered if women must always use them as cruelly as Dorothy was using them, out of a willingness to avenge themselves on the other moments of helplessness to which the *rôle* condemned them.

At last he looked into her eyes, and asked, without preface, "Is there boiling oil in *all* your punishments, Miss Maurice?"

"I don't know," she returned politely, with the same glittering and correct effect of having said nothing.

"Because if I might choose the quality of my mercy I should like it strained. I suppose I am not worthy of the unstrained. At all events the steady drip, drip of it, does n't soothe me as it ought to. Please strain your mercy, Miss Maurice. What I need, I see, is open cruelty."

She stared at him a moment, in doubt how she should answer this. "I am glad you think that," she said seriously, at last. "But you must look to some one else for it."

"You mean that it is enough to have deserved such a punishment from a person without asking her to be at the pains of administering it?"

"I think you are much in the wrong."

This time there was no mistaking her earnestness. "Good heavens, Miss Maurice. Have I been guilty of other crimes besides those I know?" He paused nervously, observing to himself how beautiful she was in the sudden pallor for which he blamed himself. The fair hair curling spontaneously about her high, white brow, those melting grey eyes, dashed with the whimsical thread of brown, the delicate little mouth, which he had set vaguely quivering now, the poise of her exquisite head, seized him with an irrelevant, and fruitless yearning.

"You know best about that," she said, and he saw she was answering a question he had forgotten the purport of. In an instant, however, he remembered.

"Oh, Miss Maurice," he cried, "are you fair? I give you my word I don't know what you are talking of, unless you are still thinking of the wickedness I know of; and I can't believe that it's only that."

"No, it is n't that," she told him, a little wearily.

"Is it *anything* to do with that—with my brother?" he asked, desperately.

"Yes."

"I might have known it! Well, what, Miss Maurice?" he demanded, in unconscious rudeness. "I have borne pretty much all I am up to from Jasper. Has he been telling you how I have wronged him?"

"Do you think that would be like your brother?" asked Dorothy with an implication in her voice which nettled Philip beyond control.

"No, I don't, Miss Maurice. He probably told you how finely I have been behaving toward him, and you guessed the other thing from a combination of your knowledge of me, and your certainty that Jasper would always have a chivalrous word for his enemy."

"Now it is you who are not fair," she rejoined.

"I don't mean to be unfair," he said, and there he stopped. "Did he tell you of his visit to the 'Snow Find'?" he asked suddenly. "Is that it?"

"No," she returned tremulously. "I guessed it; I forced it from him; I surprised his confidence. And after all he would tell me nothing; I would not let him tell me anything. But I understood."

"Ah!" exclaimed Philip bitterly, "you understood!"

She rose haughtily. He saw that he had gone too far.

"Oh, I am abominably rude! Pardon me! Or don't pardon me! Tell me to go. But if you knew, Miss Maurice——"

"Tell me," she begged. She put forth her hand. Philip seized it, and dropped it instantly. He turned away.

"No, no! I can't," he cried. "Somebody ought to tell you perhaps. But I can't. It is n't—it is n't decent. He clasped his arms despairingly behind his shaggy head as he walked from her toward the window and stared out at the long backbone of the Sangre de Christo range.

She guessed this for the pride it was; but she had no information which could have enabled her to justly estimate the obscure and multitudinous motives which made it up; and she was far from guessing the rightness of feeling which actually lay at the root of it.

"But there *is* something I can tell you, Miss Maurice," he said, turning suddenly, with a new light in his eyes which awed her. She shrank from him, and sat down hastily. "Perhaps it will explain for me—not this precisely, but everything, and if it explains nothing, why I shall be content that you should not understand my relation to Jasper, either, because nothing will matter, then. I have no right to tell

it to you; though you have a right to know it. But I can't tell you unless you promise me to understand that it asks nothing of you, that it has no relation to you except as your knowledge of it may help you to—to understand——. I love you. That is all. I love you."

She dropped her eyes.

"I wanted you to know," he said, in the silence that fell.

"Yes," she whispered, in assent to this.

"But I did n't want—I don't want the fact to exist for you, except as it may help you to think more kindly of me; to—to understand." Philip believed that he meant this. "I have no right to speak of it—and absolutely no right to found anything further on it." He did not say it in the hope that she would contradict him; but a pang shot through him when she did not. He should not have told her any more, he said proudly to himself, whatever she might have urged against this statement; but her silence whetted the pain at his heart. He rubbed the two half dollars left over from his journey to Piñon against each other in his pocket, and thought how the actual occasion of his forbearance lacked dignity; it really was n't as noble as it seemed,

perhaps, for a beggar to refrain from a proposal of marriage. When the beggar happened to be as much in love as he, however, it was hard.

"Well," he went on, as she still kept silence, "there's nothing more to say." He came over to her, and offered his hand in farewell. "Good-bye, Miss Maurice. If you ever give me a thought after this, remember, please, that whatever you have to think of me, it was in this way that I thought of you—that I shall always think of you."

She said nothing, still; and he turned to go.

"But," she called after him, raising her head now, with a smile in which many emotions played, "you are going to stay to luncheon, Mr. Deed?"

He turned at the fancy of a note between roguish and caressing in the sound of her unsteady voice, and started toward her—withholding himself instantly. Then he remembered what she had asked him and could have smiled for the absurdity of his unhappy lover exit arrested by the banality of a luncheon engagement.

"No—no, I must n't," he found himself saying; but he heard the door knob turn in Maurice's firm clutch, and knew that he must.

Maurice came in upon them rubbing his large hands in smiling hospitality; and abandoned the amiable commonplace he had ready for Philip, to glance sharply at the two. He concealed adroitly his sense of having interrupted an intimate collision; but he followed them into the dining-room, after having asked Philip to give his arm to Dorothy, with a look of grave satisfaction on his face.

CHAPTER II

The luncheon lagged, though it began with salmon, and went on to escalloped oysters, to quail on toast, and finally to a California fruit, which none of them knew. Dorothy said she had forgotten its name; it grew in a tin can—like the oysters and the salmon. They ate, save Maurice, as if the quality of the luncheon alone concerned them. Maurice talked beamingly about a host of subjects, in the full, orotund voice which sounded so well from the pulpit. He made all the talk. Philip was silent and ill at ease; Dorothy answered her father, and kept him going. She flushed when Philip once looked her way. After that they avoided each other's glances.

When they were alone with their wine and cigarettes—Maurice kept up the customs of a higher civilization jealously—the clergyman told Philip the history of his

purchase of the claret he was drinking, with the deliberation which characterized his talk. Philip writhed inwardly. He longed to get away.

Maurice seemed to have plenty of leisure, however, and made no move to rise. He left inviting gaps in the conversation when he had done his story of the wine, as if he expected Philip to take it up, and Philip had begun dimly to divine an intention in this, when Maurice finally said himself,

"I think, Mr. Deed, we may deal with each other quite frankly." He cleared his throat, caressing his wine-glass meditatively.

Philip bowed politely across the table, not knowing what was coming; but feeling the assumption to be a safe one. He had always been on his guard in his few conversations with Maurice. He did not trust him. He found himself constantly wondering what he was up to; what purpose underlay the obvious meaning of the things he said.

"Yes, so I thought," continued Maurice in response to his nod. He offered him cigarettes. Philip took one and struck a match. As Maurice lighted his own, he glanced at his companion through the smoke and asked, as if it were a casual question, "May I ask if I rightly infer

that you have a more than common regard for my daughter?"

Philip flushed. He was wholly at a loss for an answer.

"I need not say that it is not to challenge such a regard if it exists, nor to question your action in any way, that I speak," continued Maurice in a conciliatory tone, anticipating the resentment of his inquiry which he began to see rising in Philip's face. "I should not ask if I had not good reason—the best of reasons. You will quite agree with me, I am confident, when you understand what they are. But first, as to the main question. I need not repeat it?"

"No," said Philip, and was going on angrily, but stopped himself. "Yes, you are right. I love Miss Maurice."

He remembered that he was talking to her father, who after all, had an excellent right to question him.

"Ah!" said Maurice, "I have long believed as much. May I ask—it is my last question—if I am right in supposing that you have made Dorothy aware of this?"

Philip remembered the scene on which the clergyman had just come in. He had hoped that it might never be known to any soul; least of all did he like to talk it over

with Maurice. But he said helplessly and a little savagely, "It is true. Yes. But ——"

"She has refused you, then?"

Philip frowned. "I don't know why you assume——" he began.

"Mr. Deed, we shall get on in this delicate matter only if we understand quite clearly that I speak as your friend," interrupted Maurice. He sipped slowly at his claret. "I know that I may not always have seemed so. But I have learned—some things have come to my knowledge."

Vaguely and doubtfully at first, and then surely, Philip had seen for himself that Maurice's inclination toward him was friendly.

From whatever cause, out of the coldness he had kept for him hitherto; out of the warm and friendly association with Jasper of which every one in Maverick knew; out of the old liking for the match broken off by Dorothy, which Philip suspected in him; and at all events, out of the open favour he had lent the new relation between Jasper and Dorothy, this was the issue. It was strange, but he did not doubt it, and if he had doubted it, Maurice's next words must have been convincing.

"I have heard the truth about you and your brother; and I have reason to believe that Dorothy is still in ignorance of it. You are aware of the feeling I have had towards Jasper. I have liked him—we have liked him; and Dorothy still does. It is because I believed that Dorothy's proper understanding of some things, just at this moment, may deeply affect her future and yours, and—mine, that I wish to offer you a friendly word."

"You are very good," murmured Philip, plunging about in his imagination for a final meaning beneath this.

"No. If I am good, it is to Dorothy—to myself. You may believe that I should hardly be speaking to you in this way if it were not of vital concern to me that I should."

He judged it unnecessary to enter with Philip into the facts he had lately learned regarding Jasper's present tenure of the ranch. The injunction against Snell had become town talk within two days of Jasper's departure; and had set all Maverick agog for the painful but interesting story which must be lurking behind this action of Jasper's. Maurice had heard the entire story from Cutter, who saw no reason to withhold the truth when Maurice questioned him

at the post-office on the day he heard the rumour of the injunction.

"I shall speak plainly, Mr. Deed, for both our sakes," the clergyman pursued. "I think it right you should know that your brother has proposed to Dorothy."

"Jasper!" cried Philip. He fronted Maurice abruptly, perusing his face with an estranged regard.

"Have you not known?" exclaimed the clergyman.

"Known!" repeated Philip, with a haggard face. "Yes, Oh yes!" And, after a moment, "He has offered himself. He has been accepted. Why do you bring me here to tell me this?"

"He has offered himself," assented Maurice, passing over Philip's tone with dignity, "but he has not been accepted. Dorothy has promised him his answer within a week. The week will be at an end to-morrow." Philip opened his lips with a passionate impulse, but swallowed back his words, grinding his teeth. "What his answer shall be depends, as I believe, upon the way in which you may receive what I have to say."

"For God's sake, man, go on! I'm listening."

Philip bit his lip, and waited for what might follow, with

his eyes fixed on the line of low-lying hills, opposite Ouray, which were visible from the dining-room window.

"Quietly, if you please, my dear young sir. This matter, let me remind you, concerns me at least as much as it can concern you. Dorothy is my only daughter. My life goes with her happiness. But we can gain nothing by haste." Philip made an impatient gesture of apology.

He stared at him restlessly, across the table, with his chin in his hand as he went on.

"What I am about to say," continued the clergyman, "is most intimate. It touches a subject which I had hoped never to be obliged to re-open to any person living. Circumstances have ruled otherwise, and I have now only to add, in disclosing certain facts, that I shall look to you to regard them as communicated under the most sacred seal of confidence."

These cautious guards and defences, these precautions against one knew not what, by turns tortured and sickened his companion. He found his perception reeling giddily every little while, before the clergyman's abominable flow of language, which seemed one sheen to him, like the glaze on paper.

"I don't know whether you know precisely the circumstances attending my departure from Laughing Valley City?" said Maurice interrogatively. He tried for a parody of the importance of the name in his voice; but his anxiety came uppermost.

Philip turned toward him quickly and said, "I am glad to have the opportunity of letting you know, Mr. Maurice, that I *do* know rather more than it seemed a kindness to Miss Maurice to mention in the cave that day. I have never felt quite right about that. But it seemed to Cutter and me that she would not care to know that we had seen what passed on the hillside above the cañon, the day of the storm. If I had imagined that it could make a difference to you I should have spoken long ago. It was Miss Maurice who was in my thoughts," he confessed.

"Ah, I am glad of that—yes," mused the clergyman; "glad, because it will help you to understand a feeling of mine about that—that circumstance. I have never told Dorothy the actual—the exact occasion of that scene on the hillside." Maurice leaned over toward Philip, and questioned his face closely. "Do *you* know it?" he asked.

"No," said Philip.

"Ah, well, perhaps that is as well, too. You will believe, when I tell you this, that I am concealing nothing from you. The Vigilance Committee," he gave them the title with a curl of his large, handsome lip, from which he stroked away his jaunty moustache, "thought me in the wrong in refusing to go and read the funeral service over two men who had died at Laughing Valley of small-pox." Maurice's face worked, and for a moment he did not attempt to go on. "The right or wrong of that we must leave to a higher tribunal," continued he, dismissing the ethical question with a gesture. Philip shuddered. "What immediately concerns us is that Dorothy has never known why I was forced to depart from the place."

"She must never know," said Philip huskily. A vicarious sense of shame for the clergyman would not let him lift his eyes to look in his face.

"Exactly. She must never know. But there is another matter of which she must not know."

He turned a doubtful eye on his companion as he paused. Philip turned cold, wondering what worse thing this man could have done to shame his daughter.

"It is, in a way, all the same matter," Maurice was saying

while his companion dumbly waited and wondered. Philip drew a breath of relief. "Information reached me a week since through a good friend of ours—of hers, of yours; in point of fact, through Mr. Messiter, that—"

"I beg your pardon. Is Mr. Messiter back in Maverick? I heard that he had returned to his mine at Laughing Valley."

"So he has," responded the clergyman, with the ghost of an indulgent smile for Philip's transparent impulse of jealousy. "He came here a week ago for the day only, to see me—in point of fact to warn me. He had heard rumours at Laughing Valley that some of my enemies there had been inciting the Bishop when he visited the place a fortnight or so back, to take some action founded on this—this accusation against me; and like the dear, good fellow he is—knowing what that must mean for Dorothy—he had posted down to Denver without stopping to consult me, in the hope of inducing the Bishop not to move in the matter." Maurice sighed. "It was good of him, but it was useless. Once brought to the ears of the Bishop I have always known what must happen." Philip saw the green hills outside the window swim before his eyes. "And—well, the end of it is that I

have this morning a letter from the Bishop—generous and temperate,—even fatherly, but quite plain—suggesting that it would be convenient if I should let him have my resignation of my charge here."

Philip took the letter he handed him, as he started up with an inarticulate groan on his lips. He carried it to the window, and stared at it for a moment helplessly; the words refused to relate themselves to one another and he finally turned and gave it back to Maurice, in silence. The clergyman shrank from the look on Philip's face as he put forth his hand to take the letter.

"Yes," owned he; "it's bad. It is a blow. I won't deny it. And yet not an unbearable blow to me. I have expected it, for one thing; and I see, now that it has come, that I have long been half willing." He looked at Philip sharply. "I was not made for a clergyman, Mr. Deed."

"Oh, don't say that, man!" The cry was torn from him. "For Heaven's sake, don't say that!" The ignominious, the disastrous fact seemed to connect itself intolerably with the thought of Dorothy; it seemed to leave two lives in ruins. If it had been the clergyman alone, one

would have seen only the tragic waste of a career. But as the fact involved Dorothy, Philip could not face it.

Turning toward Maurice he saw that a ghastly pallor had stolen over his face, which was sunk upon his breast. He went over to him and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Come!" he said gently, with an indescribable mingling of contempt and pity pulling at his heart. "Take this! You will feel better." He poured a glass of the wine Maurice had been discussing in that moment of after-luncheon talk which seemed now so far removed. The clergyman snatched it, and drank it off.

Philip was ashamed to be witness to his recovery of himself. He turned his back, and went to the window, within sight from which a rider was endeavouring to break the spirit of a bucking pony. There was a large open space behind the house, not yet built upon, and untamed bronchos were often brought here from the neighbouring livery stable for this purpose. The tiresome iteration of the see-saw motion by which the brute was viciously endeavouring to throw his rider renewed Philip's restlessness.

"You must go away from here," he heard himself saying

to Maurice, as he turned in the need of action, or the suggestion of action. "You must go at once!"

Maurice shook his head with the sadness of a superior knowledge.

"No! No! It is ended. I shall never preach again."

Philip was appalled.

"Oh, my dear sir! Shake this off. For your daughter's sake—for Dorothy's sake! Shake it off!"

Maurice looked up at him with a mournful smile. "Shake it off! My dear young man, I have been dismissed. I have been disgraced! Oh, my God!" he cried, breaking down suddenly, and burying his face in his hands.

Philip bit his lip. For a moment there was silence in the room. Then there came a ring at the outer door, and a knock at the door of the room in which they were. Philip darted to it, with the fear in his throat that it might be Dorothy. It was the servant, come to say that Mr. Vertner was in the parlour. "Say that Mr. Maurice will see him presently," he said.

"Do you mean to say that you could not secure another parish?" he demanded, as he returned.

Maurice, who had risen at the knock, and was himself

restlessly pacing the room with his hands in his pockets, stopped before the table, littered with the remains of the meal, and absently took a *bon-bon* from a plate.

"Secure it? Perhaps. Keep it? No. This story would rise. Oh, I'm not degraded from my office; I'm not unfrocked, as they used to call it!" He laughed scornfully. "It's simply a story—the most powerful, the most subtle, the deadliest, the most pitiless enemy a man can know. If I were younger,—or, let me say it all; if I cared for my calling as I once did, if I could be back at twenty-five again, fresh from the seminary, a young divinity student, with the old fire, with the old feeling that the priesthood was the holiest, the noblest, almost the only possible vocation in the world: ah, then I might go on and fight it out! I might try to live it down. But I don't care! I have learned to live another life. I have always wanted to do other things, and even when I cared most for my work, I have done them. I have done them, at last, so much that they own me. I don't *care*," he repeated in a kind of cry of pain and stopped short in his march from end to end of the room, to add, looking Philip in the eyes—"except—*except* for one thing."

Philip framed her name with his lips. Maurice nodded. "For Dorothy I would give all that remains to me of life; for Dorothy I would go on in this work of mine, if they would let me, always. *She* cares for it. To see me give it up will be a shock to her. To see me forced to leave it in disgrace would kill her."

"She must not know it," said Philip, setting his teeth.

"*Must* not," repeated Maurice. He stopped again, and faced Philip. "Ah, I hoped you would say that! I knew it .... You understand, then, my purpose in telling you. You can see, now, how it is that the man who is to marry Dorothy should share this purpose with me?"

"To keep the knowledge from her?" asked Philip quietly. He divined with contempt how Maurice must be doomed to long with all his cowering soul that Dorothy should never come to know him as he was; but he forced himself to do justice to the impulse of love which had the same need. Maurice loved his daughter; he forgave him much for that.

"To keep the knowledge from her," repeated Maurice. "Perhaps you can also understand how it is necessary that he should be *able* to keep it from her."

"Able?"

"If I give up my calling, Mr. Deed, I give up the only means I know of earning a living. I can stay in it, and fight, and she must know; or, (the question of livelihood being done away with,) I can leave it, apparently, of my own will, and she need not know. I must stay in it, if I must go on earning my living; I must leave it if she is not to know."

Philip regarded him in amazement. The words sang through his head backwards and forwards. He made nothing of them.

"Yes," he assented, without knowing to what he assented.

"A week ago I should have been saying this to your brother. I know him now. It is impossible that I should any longer wish his marriage with Dorothy. And yet it may still have to be. You know Dorothy's relation to Jasper. Why not say it frankly? You know that she once cared enough for him to engage herself to him." Philip bit his lip. "You can judge whether it is unlikely that she will accept Jasper to-morrow when he comes, if nothing happens."

Philip clenched his hands. "Likely? It is certain! You don't know!"

"I do know," rejoined the clergyman quietly. "I have gathered my own impressions—from Dorothy, from the discontinuance of your visits to us, from other things. I know what Dorothy thinks; and I know, now, that she is wrong. It is because of that I speak." Maurice looked at him keenly. "I *wish* something to happen," he said.

Philip felt himself choking. "Do you mean—? Speak out, man! Do you mean that—that you think I have a chance with her?"

"Ah, I must not say! I recommend you not to be discouraged."

"Oh, if I thought it!" cried Philip.

"I only ask you to remember my situation, hers—what we have said."

"Tell me!" exclaimed Philip fiercely, with a sudden thought: "Have you told all this to Jasper, and has he refused to listen?"

"No," returned the clergyman, without offence, and with the sad calm that remains to the purposes of a broken man, "I have spoken first to you. I shall state the necessities of the case to him, only if you force me to."

A wild joy played through Philip's veins. He turned away to hide his unhoped-for happiness, with its perfect mingling of a satisfied—a richly satisfied debt. He drank deep of the pleasure of holding Jasper's fate in his hands before he would turn and face Maurice again. It was worth while to have borne what he had borne from Jasper for this moment.

"You will see now—I may say it frankly, since you understand, now, that it implies no reflection on you—how, in my present situation, in Dorothy's situation, I could not let her think of a poor man, even if she were inclined to."

Philip started. He remembered his old, his rooted distrust of Maurice. Was it possible that all this story was devised —cooked up? But, if it was, what was its object? He had nothing to give Maurice; he could do nothing for him. Surely he was the type of poverty!

And then, in an instant, he saw. He perceived that he stood on the brink of a precipice, and realized that he had brought himself to it. It was not Maurice. Beside him the clergyman was a man of truth and justice and honour.

"That is so," he heard the clergyman going on, "because the man who marries Dorothy must be able to make it

practicable for me to leave the ministry, now, at once; and naturally, and without the scandal which would kill her." He paused. Then, after a moment, "But if Dorothy should listen to you," he added, "it must be so for another reason. If Dorothy should engage herself to any one but your brother, it is right to tell you that I must be prepared to find a considerable sum at once."

Philip's eyes fell. The clergyman studied his face attentively.

The younger man raised his eyes at last, and gave back Maurice's look.

"Why?" he asked, coldly.

"Because I owe your brother rather more than five thousand dollars."

"Jasper? Why? How?"

"The larger part of it was a loan from him to enable me to take a share in Vertner's paper, *The Kalendar*. The rest is made up of smaller sums, borrowed before and since. It began with a trifling loan to assist me in escaping from certain difficulties rising out of my Church School of Music in Michigan. You may have heard of my failure there. I have always been grateful to him for that. And from time

to time I have wanted money. I have never been able to make my tastes harmonize with my income. I think you know how that is, Mr. Deed?"

Philip winced at this home-thrust, and winced even more at the association of himself with the pitiable man before him. "Things which to a certain order of mind seem luxuries, to us—to me, are necessities. Jasper has found his account in this. When I have wanted money he has always pressed it on me. He has had his purpose. But he has not let me feel it. A week ago, after he had spoken to Dorothy, he sought me out at the station. He reminded me then."

"Cad!" exclaimed Philip under his breath; but his mind was already far away. A thousand thoughts went racing through his head, grouping themselves odiously, and dissolving again in strange and alluring shapes.

His companion did not respond, and the conversation fell.

Philip sat staring moodily at the stove which, in this room, replaced the usual open fire. A kettle hummed on it, purfling into the air its leisurely cloud of steam. The cat lying before the stove purring regularly, and the ticking of the clock on the mantel made the silence hideous. Philip

knew that his hope of Dorothy, his future and his honour lay on the other side of this silence.

In the swift, final moment of temptation, if a man may be said to think it is at least not his present thought which decides. The thoughts already allowed himself; the trivial consents; the reasoned compliances gone before, determine for him. He may even find himself bound by his silences. And for Philip, casting about in the blind fever of his hope to save himself, the right and wholesome thoughts which he could still conjure to his aid were answered, not by another and an evil thought, but by a feeling—a sweet, strong ecstasy, that gripped and held him, and seemed to have its own sacredness.

Maurice's secret—was it likely that Jasper would keep it from Dorothy beyond the moment in which it served his interest to guard it? Had not he, Philip, the pre-eminent right of reverence, of tenderness over a future that must always be threatened by the knowledge of what Maurice had told him? And he loved her. Did Jasper love her as he loved her? A passionate belief in the supreme right of his love filled him.

Yet all the rectitude of a life unspotted by an act of

wrong rose in protest. Little impulses mingled with the big. A certain pride which he had always kept about his final integrity in money affairs, in the midst of the looseness about them, of which every one knew, caused him to smart in imagination. He seemed to see that he could not do this thing; not for any happiness the earth could hold; not for Dorothy.

He opened his lips to tell Maurice that the "Little Cipher" was Jasper's; and that, if he sought a man strong in the strength that wealth gives, it was to him that he must turn. But the silent shaping of the sentence in which he should tell him, gave the whole story of his real relation to Jasper back to his memory.

Was it more, or other than a fair exchange—the ranch for the mine? It was ever Jasper's taunt that he did not pay his debts. There was a debt he would pay. The accumulations, the additions, the compound interest of insult and offence, gathered themselves, now, in his mind into a single bulk, in the face of which all scruples grew absurd.

He would pay the debt; and if he overpaid it, there was always the obligation his father owed Jasper. The balance

could be credited to that account. As he thought of his father, the savage impulse of hate which had caused him to gloat a few moments earlier in the knowledge that Jasper's future lay in his hands, sent a sweep of exultant yearning for vengeance through him.

He saw that in all his forbearance toward Jasper, in his softening of his father's wrath, in the just course he had tried to walk with his brother since Jasper had wronged him, the black hate which now rose in his heart, had its part. It must always since have lain crouched there. It seemed now to spring out from him into an awful aloofness where, with a beast's instinct, it had the will, if he would let it, to rend and tear.

Was he to give this man a fortune? Was he to beggar himself for him? He was ready to do that. He had meant to do it. But how if to impoverish himself and to enrich Jasper was to lose the new hope of Dorothy, thrilling along his pulses like wine? Could he bear it? Perhaps. But to lose her that Jasper might win her? . . . He shook his head with a gentle smile of scorn.

"Well?" inquired Maurice.

Philip rose suddenly. A light shone in his eyes.

"May I speak to Miss Maurice?"

The clergyman glanced at him in surprise. But he rose and went to the door with him.

"Yes."

Philip passed out into the hallway with the flicker of a smile on his set lips.

CHAPTER III

The sun was dyeing the paper stained glass in the hall windows to a similitude of the costly beauty they imitated as Dorothy went to the front door at sound of the bell. Through one of the palest lozenges of glass she discerned a figure which she knew for Vertner's. His hand was on the bell when she opened the door to him.

"Oh, are you back, Mr. Vertner?" she said, offering him her hand.

"Yes. You just saved yourself. In another moment I should have started that slam-bang gong on its errand of destruction." It was one of the gongs, set in the door itself, which explode a clangour through the house, sending a shiver to the remotest nerve of the structure. "There would be bells in your landlord's house if we had the build-

ing of it, would n't there? We'd have them in the window-sashes, they'd go off when Cozzens opened his bureau drawers; they'd be concealed in chairs; we'd pave the house with them; he'd go to sleep to a weird whirr from the cellar, and wake to the unmerciful buzz of one of the things by his bedside. I think we could fix him out. How's your father?"

Dorothy smiled and changed the subject with his own facility. "Papa is very well. Would you like to see him? He is at luncheon with Mr. Deed, but he will be in, in a moment." She opened the door into the little parlour at the front of the house.

"Don't disturb him," said Vertner as he walked briskly over to the plant stand on which Dorothy kept her winter flowers, and put his face down into a geranium. "You made out with the cactus, did n't you? You must show Beatrice. No, it was only a little matter."

"About the paper?"

"Well, partly. I've got a new idea about the *Kalendar*. But I think I must have wanted to see you as much as anything. We have n't talked 'schemes' for a long time, have we?"

It had been a joke between them since the day of their conference about the paper that Vertner must always discuss his new scheme with Dorothy before finally committing himself to it. He pretended to defer to her advice; and Dorothy pretended she believed that he did.

"Oh, no!" assented Dorothy. "What is the new one, Mr. Vertner? Is it a 'bonanza' or 'a gold mine'? I'm sure 'some one is bound to go into it if you don't,' and that it will 'give you the cinch on the whole business,'" she said, parodying his phrases fearlessly; "but do you think we ought to go into it? Should we 'come in on the ground floor'? That's the important point for us to consider, is n't it?"

She made these suggestions absently. She was thinking of something else.

"Well, I don't know," rejoined Vertner, gazing at the blooming cactus, while he swung his hat between his legs. "Don't you think we ought to make sure first whether Schlesinger will sell?"

Dorothy brought herself back to give this question the advantage of her judgment, and they laughed together, as Vertner explained his plan of forming a syndicate to buy up

the entire municipality of Spesiana, a deserted city in the mountains, which had enjoyed its boom but had not lived through it. Vertner meant to organize another boom. Schlesinger had bought most of the city lots on speculation, but he would sell, now, if he was approached right. The boom would begin after the sale. He said he could work the newspapers.

Vertner noticed that Dorothy's attention wandered. She usually listened to his schemes intently; and guessing that something interested her more at the moment, he changed the subject with, "So Jasper is back?"

"Mr. Deed? No. It is Mr. Philip Deed who is with papa."

"No? Is it? I want to see him. I want to congratulate him. You heard, of course?"

"About his mine? Oh, yes. Mr. Cutter told us."

"You don't seem very glad," he said, glancing at her.

"Glad? Oh, yes."

"Well then, not enthusiastic."

Dorothy regarded him studiously a moment without speaking. Many thoughts were going through her mind—many considerations; and at last a resolution seemed to

enter it, for she said suddenly, and with an effect of bracing herself,

"Mr. Vertner, do you know Mr. Philip Deed very well?"

Vertner was instantly serious. "Yes, Miss Maurice. Very well. Why?" he asked kindly.

"Because—— You will know of a difference he has had with his brother—a quarrel: I—I don't know what. I have n't liked to ask. But I must ask some one, now. And you—you will know."

The uncharacteristic hesitations, the tremulous advances and retreats seemed to Vertner to call on his chivalry.

"But surely you have heard——?" he began blunderingly.

"I have heard of the injunction which Mr. Jasper Deed has secured against his brother—something about his ranch. Yes. He has had to defend himself, at last."

"Who?"

"Why, Mr. Deed."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Maurice, but which?"

"Mr. Jasper Deed, of course."

"Jasper?" She nodded. "*Jasper?*" he repeated.

"Jasper defend himself, and 'at last'? Oh, Miss Maurice! Why, would you mind telling me how much you *do* know of this?"

She shook her head in rueful bewilderment. "I don't know."

"Well, you know how things stood when he went away. Let's find a basis, Miss Maurice. This hurts my poor head."

"But you don't suppose he would tell me, surely? You know him, Mr. Vertner. Does it seem likely that he could condemn his brother to me if—if he had suffered from him. You don't know. Even if it were likely, it would have been impossible to him, to any one, as—as things have been."

"Would it?" asked Vertner, in a daze. "Oh, yes, of course it would!" And then, "To whom?"

"To whom?"

"Yes, whose impossibility—who could n't? Yes, that's what I mean?"

"Mr. Jasper Deed," she said quickly. "Who else could I mean?"

"Oh, I don't know! I don't know!" cried Vertner, beating back an imaginary army of conjectures with his out-

stretched palm. And, falling sober again, "Philip, for one, I should say, Miss Maurice?"

"Before *he* went away, did you mean?"

"Well, yes," drawled Vertner.

"But——"

"And did he never tell you how things stood in this case of Deed *versus* Deed?"

"Ah, you expect him to have condemned himself? So did I. I thought him strong enough. I believed he would rather condemn himself than let me doubt his brother wrongly. Oh, if he had been strong enough for that, I should have believed in him always! I should have known. He did not believe that I would know. He would not believe that I should understand how his brother could be maddening, and he—he hot-headed."

"And do you mean to say——?" cried Vertner. "Oh, no, no! It can't be! I knew the boy was a wild and roaring unicorn on some subjects, but I never supposed he could go and be such an ass as——. And you have been thinking that *he* was the one to blame in all this row with Jasper! Oh, that's very pretty!" He paused a moment to contemplate the beauty of the idea! "And you never knew that

Jasper had done his brother out of his share in the ranch by a foul trick, and broken his father's heart by the same operation: and sent him to——! You never knew all that!" he exclaimed, breaking off suddenly. "And you've been thinking—— Oh! Wow! Wow!" howled Vertner, inarticulately. "Why you must keep up with the news of the day, Miss Maurice," he told her, when he could speak. "You mustn't let these facts of contemporary human interest get by you, in this way—though, come to think of it, I don't know how you would have heard about it, unless Phil had told you. Except Deed and his wife, who have taken their knowledge off to heaven knows where, no one knows anything about it but Philip and myself. Jasper knows about it. But he did n't tell you? No, naturally. There *has* been one other—the fellow who bought the ranch, Snell. But he's been keeping it dark. *I* don't know what's possessed *him!*"

"Bought the ranch?" gasped Dorothy. "Mr. Snell?"

"Yes. Oh, yes. That's just a little bit from this picturesque muss. You shall have the rest if you like the sample."

"Tell me the whole, please, Mr. Vertner. Tell me

everything," cried Dorothy in a brave voice that died away in a quiver.

When Vertner found himself in the street a little later, after telling her the whole story, including Deed's and Margaret's share in it, he turned toward home, cursing himself roundly. He did not like to see a woman cry.

Dorothy stood with her face pressed against the pane, looking out desperately toward the big, uncaring mountains. She felt Philip by her side, and could not turn her face. They stood together in the window, for a moment, in silence.

"Would it matter if I said——" began Philip, in a low tone. But at the sound of his voice she turned her streaming eyes upon him, and he stood gazing into them.

"Don't!" she begged, brokenly. "Don't!"

He shrank. It was like a ghostly voice crying out on him to stay his purpose.

"No, you must listen!" he had said incoherently, before he knew. He did not know what he meant to ask her to listen to.

He seized her hand involuntarily. She caught it away. "No," she cried. "No! You don't *know!*"

His conjecture darted instantly to her father. Had she heard? Was the little leaven of another's good to fail his act? Was she to suffer notwithstanding? The flux and influx of his will about the odious thing he was doing went on in him sub-consciously in the face of his resolve to take his right, to use the mine which was not his, to square accounts with Jasper, to deal with him as he had been dealt by.

The thought that he should not benefit her daunted him. He seemed now to himself to find his only warrant for his act in this little note of right, of kindness, or love which sang within it somewhere.

"I have wronged you, Mr. Deed," he heard her saying, as all his resolve seemed sucked away from him in the sudden outflow of his will. "Oh, I have wronged you bitterly!"

He looked up. "Wronged me?" he cried.

"Yes, yes! Oh, yes! We can't speak of it. There's nothing I can say or do that could make you know how—how I feel to have—to have——"

He saw the tears start in her eyes with a shock of shame. "I hope there is n't, Miss Maurice! Don't try to say anything like that! Pray don't! I could n't bear it."

"But I must. Your silence—I misconstrued it. I thought——"

"And you don't think so, now? I'm glad of that." He took her hand, and this time she let him keep it a moment.

"But—you don't know what I have thought of you!"

Philip frowned, but he said with a smile, "I don't care; or I sha'n't if you'll tell me what you think, *now*." He bent over her, looking into her eyes. She dropped her gaze to the carpet.

"Look up!" he said. She obeyed him slowly. They let their eyes rest on each other, and melt and mix in a glance that taught them one another. Then he stooped shyly and kissed her.

CHAPTER IV

The days that followed were very dear to Dorothy. She had given herself wholly to him in that first meeting of the lips which seemed to make all things straight, and straight for ever; she had her reserves with him, but she had no doubts. She knew, now, that she had been his and only his, from the beginning. She thought of Jasper, as she now saw him, with a shudder, and made up to Philip in her heart if not in the outward expressions she allowed herself, for every kindly impulse toward Jasper she had known.

For the contumely which she seemed to herself to have heaped on Philip in believing him in the wrong in the question between him and Jasper, she could find no proper penance. But the purity, the instinctive morality, the pitiless, colourless sense of right which Jasper feared and admired in her, saw in this silence of Philip's, which had

gone so near to cost them each other, a nobility beyond praise. Philip laughed at this when she told him of it in the long interchange of confidences which filled the afternoon, after he had spoken and had taken his answer from her. She liked to have him laugh; but she said that however wicked and wrong and dangerous it was to have kept that silence, it was fine, and she would not have had him speak (especially when he saw that she doubted him) even if——

"Even, if——?" queried Philip, with the rising inflection of impudence.

She looked at him for a moment in affectionate musing. He reached from the other end of the sofa, where they were sitting, and took her hand. "No," she said, as her eyes filled spontaneously with happy tears, "I should never have forgiven you if you had let it go so far as *that!*"

She began to abuse his foibles to win her way back to her reserves. She said it would n't do to spoil him too much. He had spoiled himself enough already. It was no wonder that she had been a long time making up her mind to accept such a reckless, careless, extravagant, haphazard lover.

"Oh, come!" cried Philip. "There was nothing hap-hazard about my love. I wished sometimes that there might be."

"There's something hap-hazard about a young man who buys three ponies when he can't possibly use more than one."

"Not when one of them is for a young lady, who chooses to take a view of things, after the purchase of ponies, which makes it impossible to ask her to ride one of them!"

Dorothy blushed. "Oh!"

He made her agree to use one of the ponies as her own; and when he had taken himself off to the "Snow Find"—having first given his orders about the pony at the stables, where he had left the animal after he had ceased to see Dorothy—she sent word to the livery people that she should want to ride in the morning, early. She caught sight of Ernfield's boy passing the house on his way to the stables, and despatched the message by him.

"Benn gittin' good news, Miss Maurice?" inquired Fred, as she laid a hand on the phaeton she had come from the house to stop.

She saw that he recognized the happiness in her face;

and she liked Fred well enough, and felt safe enough with him to say, "Yes, Fred—very." But she admonished herself that this public impression of her happiness would n't do; and she asked Fred about Dr. Ernfield.

"Oh, Doc's all broke up lately," said the boy. "*I* do know what's the matter of him. He use n't to be like that. He don't seem to have his old git up an' git any more,—Doc don't! Here I benn drivin' round to tell our patients that we can't come to-day. We're laid up, we are, and that's the way it goes!"

Dorothy's heart went out to Ernfield in a pity which took a new edge from her own fortune. She asked Fred, while she smiled at his invariable air of proprietorship in Ernfield, to tell the doctor that she was coming to see him next day, if he would let her. She felt as if her love somehow consecrated her to all the suffering and failure and misfortune everywhere. She felt as if she must be worthy of her bliss; it must teach her to look out, not in. There was a fresh force in the world; it was created anew. It seemed to her that her whole life must be an outgiving of the great spiritual truth which had descended upon her. Her one word, of which she had learned the meaning for the first time to-day,

seemed to explain so much, to make so much perplexity smooth, to melt so much doubt and trouble, to make foolish so much striving. The joy which knocked at her heart, and seemed to beat there sometimes as if it would burst its gates, was not a thing of which either she or Philip should take all the good. It was for everybody; only, she thought, they should not know what blessed them. And, in the morning, as a beginning, she took her ride.

It was a good ride. She seemed to find herself in it, and these early, sunny morning hours, in which she fled along the *mesa* alone, in a sweet abandonment to the joy of the motion, of the morning, and of the inward tumult of her thoughts, remained always in her memory as moments a little better than speech could report. Even Philip she never told of this ride.

They took many rides together, however, in the valley, and among the mountains, and up the mountains; and the compensatory law of Nature by which the work of the world is continued in the face of an engagement, enabled the usual output of ore to be taken from the "Snow Find" daily, with little assistance from Philip. Cutter was one of Nature's assistants in this, and the lovers recognized together his un-

failing goodness. Philip went back and told her about their life together at Piñon. He said affectionately that Cutter was an awful ass, and the best fellow in the world. He should be sorry when he grew less of an ass, because he might be less entirely the best fellow. He said that he was afraid that the West was teaching him something; he feared he was acquiring sense about some things; he could see his affectations dropping away from him, one by one.

And then he told her about Cutter's affair with Elsa Berrian, and Dorothy compassionated him tenderly. She wished every one they liked to be engaged, to be happy in their love. She said hard things of Elsa, but she professed to be sure that she and Cutter would understand each other, finally, as *they* had. Surely they had suffered enough from misunderstandings, but all had fallen out well with them. Philip ridiculed her optimism; and then he asked her if she was quite sure that even they were beyond the reach of the accidents of fate. They would sometimes feign themselves lost to each other for the pleasure of surprising their happiness afresh; but something in Philip's voice made her turn upon him quickly.

"Why? *Is* there something? Have you heard from

your brother? What is it, Philip?" She laid a gentle hand on his arm.

They were riding on the pine-covered *mesa.*

Philip denied to himself the ache and the foreboding out of which he had spoken, as he held aside a bough to let her pass.

"Nothing," he said. "Why should there be anything?"

"I don't know. Everything makes me afraid. It was never so until—until I had this to lose. It seems to me every little while as if something must happen. Perhaps we are too happy!" She sighed, and Philip laughed down the wasteful use of a present happiness as an object for the threats of destiny.

"Do you suppose," he asked, "that no two people were ever happy enough before to excite the jealousy of the evil-minded fates?" And he added that the fates were still kept so busy on the Atlantic seaboard that they had n't had time yet to come West, and grow up with the country. "They may be wrecking the happiness of some loving pair in Connecticut, or Massachusetts, or New York at this moment. In fact, it's likely. But they have n't time for Colorado. Business is too brisk where they are."

She laughed, and Philip proposed a gallop. He was willing to be rid of his own thoughts.

Dorothy liked to make him see how she had come to be such a goose about the proportion of his guilt in his affair with Jasper. It involved accusations on both sides, and, on the whole, they liked the security with which they might now accuse each other as well as anything. She asserted that her idea about that affair was not merely the natural conclusion; but that she should think the same thing again.

"Oh, come!" cried Philip. "Not quite!"

"I don't know," said Dorothy judicially. "You see what I went on. I was sure you were a hasty, hot-tempered, sensitive, high-strung, harum-scarum young man," she said smiling at him, "and I knew your brother for a gentleman of judgment. You must remember that he had never given me any reason to doubt his honesty or his—his virtues. They were n't romantic, like the vices of some other people I could name, but they were solid. At least they seemed so. I believed in them at any rate; I suppose I 'esteemed' them. Is n't that the word?"

"You took good care not to esteem *my* virtues, I observe."

"Did I?" quizzed Dorothy. "I had n't noticed. Were they about?"

"They were n't estimable."

"I'm sure I did n't esteem them."

"I believe you. You were busy."

"Yes," she said, with a little arch lift of her eyelid, "—loving them."

They had been climbing the hill which Margaret and Ernfield had once climbed. He caught her hand to his lips.

It was easy to answer such expressions—of which, however, she was very frugal—in the manner allotted to them; and to find the moment's happiness which they should produce in the normal lover; but it was impossible to keep this content. And when he was away from her, in the face of every reason for joy, he was blankly miserable. Cutter, who was the first to whom he told the news of his engagement, and who rejoiced in it as became a friend, noticed his moodiness, as Vertner and Ernfield did, also, after a time; and they twitted or jibed him after their several fashions, until Cutter saw it was serious, and set himself to help him, if he could. But Philip repulsed him, almost rudely.

In the long nights he thought he must tell her; but when he saw her radiant face again, it was seen to be impossible and absurd. No; he had bought his happiness with a price. If the price was high the more reason for not risking it by suffering foolish qualms to tempt him to the revelation which hung always on his lips. He thought, sometimes, she must read his secret in his eyes. How could it be that a man should lose the power to face himself in the defenceless moments of solitude, and fail to show it in his countenance?

He could still make it seem right—what he had done—as it touched Jasper. Nay, it sometimes seemed as finely, as excellently right as it had seemed in the moment which had persuaded him to the wrongful silence he was now committed to. But as it lived in the same world with Dorothy, it was a foul and unspeakable thing; it was to the full the wrong, or more than the wrong it could have seemed to his old rectitude, if it had approached him in its naked guise, with no question of Jasper, of vengeance, of wrong for wrong, or of the love for which he had done it. This love was now good and sweet to him only as he could find a purity of impulse in himself answerable to the purity

of hers; he felt soiled by what he had done, to his inmost core. Her very caresses were a shame to him. He thought how she must start away from him if she knew.

In these moods he framed a dozen passionate confessions in which he told her that he was a scoundrel beneath the least of her kindnesses; he said that he had her love on false pretences; that she should know him—all of him—to know how unworthy he was. He said in these confessions which were never made that he would go away; that they would not meet again; and that—at this point a crazy pang of jealousy would intrude and he would remember that he could not leave her to Jasper. He knew that she now despised Jasper. Yet this seemed possible, or even probable.

In the midst of this harassment of mind, small things gave him pleasure. It was with a strange joy, for example, that he arranged the details of borrowing on the security of the "Little Cipher" the sum which Maurice owed Jasper. He transacted the business, giving him the money that was to deliver Maurice from Jasper's hands, and to place Dorothy for ever beyond his brother with a pleasure hardly diminished

by the sense that he was at the same time giving the final sanction to his deed, and making retreat impossible.

He recognised, with a start, as he stood by the banker's counter, the feeling which he had accused in his father. His own perception of the unwisdom, the wrong of reprisal upon Jasper, he had played utterly false, and he found himself rejoicing in having done so. He knew, now, the exultation his father had felt in squaring himself with Jasper. Still more clearly, but sadly, he saw how his father had been led to cast back his own seeming ingratitude in his face.

Ah, if he could but get at his father, they might understand each other, now. His father was the one person to whom he could fancy himself telling his story unreservedly, if he could but find him and reconcile himself to him. He did not believe he would be the surer that his plea for Jasper had been the false one it would now more than ever seem; though he thought of this. What came to him was that his father was the one man who could wholly know the goaded mind in which it had come to him that he *could* not let Jasper win his love from him, too.

The thought made the discovery of his father's whereabouts even more than the immediate necessity it had been

for the past two months. He enjoyed the reflection that Jasper would now be indirectly furnishing him with the money for lack of which he had hitherto failed to find him. He said to himself that he would start soon—at once; and then he recalled that he had promised himself to remain in Maverick until Jasper's return. If Jasper should ever come to know of what he had done he did not wish to give it to him to say that he had dodged away. He wished to face him. He was not ashamed of what he had done—not, at least, before Jasper.

He did not find his feeling about it, even as it touched Dorothy, continuous. There were odd lapses in it, followed by quick returns of remorse. It would die away from him in good hours, when they talked together, and grow a callous lump, which he was conscious of carrying about in his bosom as a burden; but he was not constantly sure of its meaning. At these times his willingness to enjoy the nearest pleasure, his liking for the comfortable, the agreeable arrangement, minded him to keep it out of his sight, if he could, and forget it. Surely he had a right to his hardly-won bliss; and if he had not, no one was likely to be benefited by any foolish asceticism about it, unless, indeed, Jasper,—whose

enjoyment of his brother's incapacity to taste the joy he had snatched from him, being imagined, helped Philip to forget manfully.

They talked of Jasper sometimes, to make sure of their possession of each other; they even indulged a wonder why he did not return, though, in their hearts, neither wished his return. They felt instinctively that his return would set a period to their present state; their next state might be better or worse, but it would not be the same. The first days of betrothal came but once, and they hedged them jealously from the world. Dorothy would not let him make their engagement known beyond the little company of their friends, and made him pledge each of them to secrecy, for a time yet. She said she knew it must come; she should have to be congratulated; she should have to see her engagement take its place among the gossip of the town, in the news of the day, but she was not ready for that yet. It was only one degree from having to feel, as she knew she should be made to feel, that a marriage was just a marriage—an interesting public function, surrounded by the usual circumstance of ushers, orange flowers, white silk, carriages, subdued whispers, rapturous comment, Lohengrin, and all the rest of it. She

might as well be a statistic, and done with it. She admitted that their marriage would be in the census; but she was willing to postpone her sense of its civic importance.

Sometimes in their rides long silences would fall, and perhaps they communicated with each other most fully in these. But they liked to speak of the time when a little turn, one way or the other, might have lost them to each other, as it seemed.

Dorothy would not admit that any chance could have been strong enough to really keep them apart: on which Philip asked her what she said to the chance which she had given herself to accept Jasper.

"Suppose I had n't come along! Suppose Vertner had n't let on what an extra abused fellow I was! It's even betting what answer he would have got."

"Well, he has n't come back for it," suggested Dorothy.

"No, but if he had?"

"I gave myself a week," she said, demurely.

"Do you mean that you gave me a week? Take care! I sha'n't believe that you were spending *all* your time disliking my part in the row with Jasper!"

"Oh, you may believe what you like!" she re-

joined flicking her horse with the quirt Philip had given her.

But, at another time, when they were sitting before the fire in her own home, she told him that it was really he who had gone nearest to make the impossibility of their not coming together possible. What did he say to the extreme folly of telling a young woman he loved her, and asking her in the same moment to understand that the fact was n't to count? To be sure he had suddenly thought better of this absurdity. It was a great point that he *had* thought better of it. But why?

A sick feeling stole over Philip as he parried this question —so obvious, so just—for the dozenth time, with a weary joke. It reappeared with the haunting effect of a threat. Must this ghost always stand at his elbow? Might he not better tell her the whole story of his temptation and his fall, and throw himself on her mercy, and her belief in him.

But he remembered Maurice, who would be so far too much involved in anything he should try to say. He could not wound the faith in her father, which he had given so much to preserve. He wished that Maurice would at least take the action which was now a matter of days, and which

could not be much longer postponed. And he wished Jasper would return. There came a point in all threatening discomforts where all his thoughts and desires about them resolved themselves into a single longing to have done with them.

When he and Maurice met in Dorothy's presence, now, they avoided each other's eye. Philip felt degraded by their common secret. He saw that he must tell Dorothy what he had done if the present situation did not come to an end soon of itself.

CHAPTER V

MARGARET clung upon her husband, as Jasper left them, and took the path back into the woods. She looked wistfully into his eyes. "Tell me it is n't true!" she whispered huskily. "Say that he is wrong! He would say his worst. I know that! Oh, James, tell me that it is n't true!"

Deed was silent. He watched Jasper's form slowly disappearing among the twilit pines, with blazing eyes. He took his breath shortly.

"True?" he asked from his absorption. He stroked her head absently. "What true, dear? Scoundrel!" he muttered.

"What he said—that you—you——?"

"That I pledged bonds left with me in trust to raise money to pay Philip? Yes. It's true," he said, clenching his hands, and staring over her head at the point where

Jasper had vanished among the trees. He was less than half conscious of making the confession which he had considered so often and painfully; but at her shrinking from him he knew that he had told her, and that he was alone with her knowledge of him. "Do you object?" he asked abruptly.

The soreness of his spirit spoke. Every nerve in him ached from the interview which he had just cut short fiercely with a word.

She could have comforted him, without a backward look on the story Jasper had told, and he would have blessed her; and, later, would have humbled himself before her with the truth. At the moment the hand of pure kindness must have been a pain; and the probe, even in the hands of love, was torture. "Do you object?" he repeated, as she did not answer.

"Object?" she cried. "Oh, my husband!"

She saw that he was in the mood when he must be hard with the person nearest him. She had just seen him tormented beyond endurance. She meant to be gentle, to be tolerant. But she could not be silent.

"I see!" exclaimed Deed. "You need n't say it. Well, the law objects, too. You are in excellent company."

"Oh, James, how should I care for that! You were in the right. I believe it. I only ask you to say it, and I will believe you. Can't you see that I can't bear to think you in the wrong?"

"Ah yes!" he exclaimed sadly. "You care too much for the right to bear to think that!"

"That is true!" she said simply. "I don't think you could want me to deny that, James, though you say it as if it were an accusation. You mean that I care for that first, and then for you. I care for you as you *are* right, *the* right! Can't you see how it's all the same thing? You have become my right. Oh, James, did n't I take you for that in marrying you?"

"Reserving your own definitions," said Deed bitterly.

"I don't define," she murmured entreatingly. "I only ask you to say!"

"And I can't say! Nothing that I could say could make what I have done seem right to your ideas of Right. You would be forced to condemn just as I should be eternally forced to do it, in the same situation. It's temperament! It's character!" he cried miserably.

The twilight had deepened during the brief minutes in

which Jasper had told his father that he knew the secret of the hypothecation of Iron Silver stock at Leadville, and had given him his choice between retreat from the sale to Snell, and an immediate publication of the facts of the hypothecation in the newspapers. He had taken his scornful answer away with him into the dusk. The darkness was now falling about them, touched only by the last reluctances of the day, which the reflected glimmer from the white hills detained vaguely still.

"Yes, yes!" assented Margaret. "I know. But what can matter if we love each other—if we trust each other!"

"Trust, Margaret! Did you trust me when I sold the ranch away from this fellow! Would you trust me, now, if I were to tell you how I used this mining stock out of a need of the same kind? I am made that way, Margaret. I could n't have helped doing it any more than you can help loathing it, now," he repeated.

"I don't loathe it," she said patiently. "I am sorry—sorry. What you say about the other—yes, I see, now, that I was wrong, or unhappy, or—I don't know what—in my way of asking you not to do that. Perhaps I shall never

be able to find words, or ways—whatever it is with which other women explain such things," she went on, with a little note of humility in her voice which touched Deed indescribably, and caused him to take her hand in his in a quick pressure as she stole it gently, almost timidly toward him. "But James," she continued quickly, "we were not married then. I am your wife, now. That has changed everything. I can't judge you. I am part of you. If you have done what—what he said, the error, the sin, if there is any, is mine, too. Let us help each other about it, James. Tell me—how was it?"

The moon stole an edge above the summit of Monk's Head, etching the dusky outline of the mountain against its peeping disk. The light kindled along the snowy flanks of the opposite hills, and ran tremulously into the black depths of the cañon beyond. He told her of the means by which he had paid Philip, as they stood in the broadening glow.

"But you meant to do no wrong!" she said as he finished.

"Oh, meant!" he exclaimed. "Do you think they will care at Leadville what I meant to do?"

"Perhaps not," she said. "But I care. If it had not been for the chance of this snow, which might have happened to any one, you would have sold the 'Lady Bountiful' to those people at Burro Peak, and no one would have been the worse for what you did." She said this stoutly, as much by way of trying to believe it for herself as to comfort him. But her conscience forced her to add, immediately, "But it was an awful mistake—it was —it was not right, was it, James?" She looked up into his eyes, questioning him doubtfully, as if she had never known days in which problems like this were decided with instinctive confidence within her own breast.

"No, Margaret, no! It was like other things—a muddle of right and wrong, I suppose; but certainly not right. Perhaps I might say for what I did that it would n't be fair to judge it in the gross. But that's the best I could say. I did it because I had to, Margaret. I did n't *mean* one thing or the other, as you call it. The position in which Philip placed me was intolerable. I changed it—I righted it. God knows with what show of justice!" He turned away. They stood for a moment, silent. Then he said, "Does it not seem my destiny, Margaret dear, to hurt you,

and always at the tenderest point? I seem to have to do the things which must wound you deepest, and then to have to hurt you deeper by wickedly trying to make you pay for my error through your sensitiveness to it. From the hour that I borrowed money at Leadville on those bonds which didn't belong to me I have been ashamed to face myself; what I did has seemed to debase me deeper and deeper every day. I have hated myself. I have wished to tell you. But when you question my act, ever so gently, I must make you suffer for my pain about it. It is because I know the things I do for what they are that I can't bear your sure eyes on them. If I believed myself as much in the right as I am always ready to say I am, I could not shrink from your brave judgments."

"Oh, James, it isn't for me to judge. But, don't you see, dear—what you say gives me courage to ask—that—?" she hesitated.

"What, Margaret?" he asked gently.

"That—that all you have done—all that you have been led to do since Jasper turned false, is all of one piece, really?"

"No," said Deed gravely, "I don't see that."

"But I do! Oh, James," she cried, "what you did to Jasper was wrong—wrong from the beginning!"

Deed frowned heavily. "Margaret! I thought you——" He bit his lip.

"That I said I was mistaken in that? In the way I chose to make you feel what I felt—yes! But in my feeling about it—oh, no, no, I was right; and if in nothing else, then right in my instinct that it was wrong for *you!* Poor James! It has been wrong, has it not?" She slipped her hand within his arm. He dropped the arm, and looked away toward the gilded white hills. But she went on, undaunted. "We have tried to cover it up in our happiness, these last few weeks. But it's true; and I see now—I'm sure that you see now—that we must face it. Do you think I don't understand how, having done what you did with Jasper, what you did with Philip had to follow? It was that I feared for you—all the endless consequences, all the suffering, all the remorse, all the snarl of wrong! I feared them for *you*, James, because I knew you—because—" her hand stole into his, and this time he held it fast—"I loved you; and because I saw—oh, so clearly—how it would all be worse for you than for another man—how you would

make it worse, because you would be trying always to burst your way through the misery; and because you would suffer more than other men from your failure, and—and your wounds! It was that that forced me to ask you not to do it. And it's that that makes me ask you now, James, to *undo* it! Don't speak! Don't say you won't or can't. You can, James, and you *must!* Can you wish to be subject for ever to such attacks? Jasper has to make them. They are in his nature; and they are part of the sure result of what you did," she said bravely. She was launched now, and did not care what she said. "What you did to right yourself with Philip was wrong, of course; but it was not the first, nor the chief wrong." She caressed his shoulder vaguely with the arm she ran about his neck. "Whatever you did, it all came from the other. It could n't have happened if the other had n't. And we must go back to that. I see now that we have been mistaken in pretending to each other that that question is dead and all its consequences buried. It can never die, James, until we face it together, and do what we still can." He turned and looked into her pleading face. "It lives between Jasper and you, and will always live until we have the courage to give up our wrong-

ful right; it lives between Philip and you, and perhaps that is past help—perhaps that is to be our punishment—but worse, much worse, it lives between *us*, James; and we shall never be happy until it is dead and out of sight! Oh, I have been thinking while we have been standing here! I have been seeing, more than ever before, how different we are, how hard it will be, always, for us to understand each other, to make allowance, to remember that we love each other, and to keep that uppermost. But I have become sure that never, for either of us, is there to be peace until this is made right!"

Deed drew her to him, and folded her in his arms, "My wise, good Margaret!" he said. "My gentle, sweet, just girl! You said a little while ago that I was your right—that you had taken me for that. But you see, now, how I could never be that. My right is personal, whimsical, fantastic, brutal, selfish. I construct it myself. I take it habitually as if it were the one right in the world, and as if it might not be the wrong of a dozen others. It is you who must be my right for the future; and I will obey it humbly. Your Right is certain because it is *not* yours—because it is the Right of others. I will do what you say, Margaret."

He bent and kissed her. Margaret touched her eyes hastily with her handkerchief. "And will you—will you restore the ranch to Jasper? Will you give him back his share?"

Deed's brow knit darkly. "My girl, my girl," he exclaimed in sadness, "you don't know what you ask!"

"But you would do that, surely. You would not hesitate now, for any feeling of—of—"

Deed shook his head bitterly. "Is it a light feeling? Do you think I could do it? Oh, Margaret, you don't *think!*" An inflection of reproach stole into his voice.

Her ear did not fail to note it. But she said, "I do! I do! It is because I think—and for you—that I beg it of you."

Her husband bit his lip. "It's preposterous, Margaret! Ask something reasonable. Would you have me humble myself before Jasper, *now*—after all that has passed, after to-day? Would you have me go to him,—his father—confess that I had been in the wrong from the beginning, and beg his permission to restore, to give back what I stole from him. I should be lying. I don't believe him in the right; I believe him hellishly in the wrong. But besides, see what he must think—that I do it in fear of his vile

threat! Could you wish that humiliation for me, Margaret? I don't believe it."

"No. We must wait, I see. We must make the other right. Then this will come right of itself. You must go back," she said. "You must find your way to Leadville the moment this snow releases us, and restore what you have borrowed."

"Borrowed? Do you think it is by that word they will know what I did at Leadville? It will be a harsher word, Margaret—a word with a penalty."

"Well then," returned she with a simplicity which at once appalled and enchanted him, "you must go back and make it right on those terms."

He stared at her fascinated. "I will!" he said at last.

"I don't mean to urge you to anything your own judgment does n't approve," she said, temporizing, as even a strong woman must before consequences which are to be wrought out beyond her sight in the man's world.

"No, no! It has been in my own mind a long time. I would have done it gladly long ago if I could have got out of this prison, and could have believed that I had a right to commit you to what must follow. I must have my own

respect back again, Margaret. You are right. I will go to Leadville, as soon as we can get away from this place, if Jasper does not contrive that I shall go earlier. And I will take the consequences."

"And then—?" She looked up into his eyes confidently, joyfully.

"Jasper?" he asked frowning.

She nodded. He shook his head.

CHAPTER VI

Beatrice folded Margaret in her arms and kissed her repeatedly and took off her cloak, and asked her where she had been, when Deed brought her to the house one evening a week later. She said that Ned was down town; and Mr. Deed was not to think of going on by the nine o'clock train to Leadville. She was charmed to keep Margaret while he went on; but he must stay, too, for the night at least. Ned would be back soon, and he was so anxious to see him.

As she spoke Beatrice glanced from one to the other. In Margaret's face she thought she saw some of what she had expected—a development, a softening, an effect like that which photographers get from the process they call "toning." It was not merely that usual, though indescribable difference which distinguishes the matron, however recent, from the maid; Margaret had changed almost in

proportion to the area she had offered for change; almost in proportion to what Beatrice had always called to herself her "unmarriageableness." What she saw made her retract silently some things she had said to Vertner; but still left her wondering. Had Margaret contrived to attune herself to her husband; or had he, feeling the sacrifice she had made in coming to him, at last, after what had happened, made the history of his sex memorable by shaping himself to her? Did they get along? That was what she asked herself. She had decided that they did (Deed's face looked strangely sad and worn; but that was, no doubt, the other matter) as she intercepted his answer to a glance from Margaret in the pause which fell at her hospitable entreaty; and yet . . . . . She went back to her old feeling that the difference between them was too irreconcilable; and that Margaret, of all persons, was the last to be able to reconcile it (it was always the woman who had to play that part in a marriage, and when the woman was wrong it was hopeless). She said, as these thoughts passed through her mind, that they had been greatly concerned lately when no one heard from them.

Deed said Yes, they had been snowed up. They had

been unable to get out; they had feared their friends would be anxious. He gave this explanation like a lesson learned by rote. He was conscious that people would be curious; it was necessary to supply an explanation for current use, and the simpler it was, and the sooner made, the better. Margaret glanced quickly at him as he spoke.

He would not take off his overcoat in response to Beatrice's entreaties: and in a few moments rose, and made his farewell. Margaret followed him into the hallway. She threw her arms about his neck.

"Oh James," she begged, through the lump that hung in her throat, "are we doing right? or no—of course we are doing right—but do you think—?"

"Margaret!" exclaimed he reproachfully. He took down her hands, and gazed into her eyes by the dim light of the hall lamp, under which they stood. "It isn't you who persuades me to falter, is it?"

"No, no. But it is so easy to persuade! It is you who have to act—to suffer! Perhaps I am wrong! Oh, think!"

"I have thought," he said soberly. "You are right. We are both right. We cannot do otherwise. Tell me dearest," he whispered, stooping to her, "can we?"

Their eyes confronted in a look in which each seemed to search the other's soul.

She turned away choking. "Go! go!" she cried in a stifled voice. She caught him to her and kissed him once, twice, and held him to her in a ravenous embrace, from which it seemed she would never let him go. Then suddenly she pushed him away, and, snatching her hands to her face, ran into the room where Beatrice awaited her.

It was finally because she was ashamed of her cowardice that she forced herself to look into the *Maverick Sentinel* the next morning. She glanced at the head-lines with a cowering heart; and when she found nothing in them beyond the usual budget of snow-slides, murder trials, Washington gossip, European war-clouds, local news, mining and cattle notes, booms and rumours of booms, she began to search again incredulously. Could it be that Jasper had held his hand? She asked Vertner, in as steady a voice as she could command—they were at breakfast—if Mr. Jasper Deed was in town.

"No," said Vertner. "Want to see him?" He smiled

over at her, unscrupulously. She shook her head, without smiling. "No," he repeated, "he isn't in town, and it's even up when he will be. He was going to be back in a week when he started; that was the word he left; and there was plenty to call him back. But it's nearer ten days and no one's heard anything of him. I *did* think some of organizing a search expedition to go and find him one of these days when business was slack, but, come to talk to the fellows in town about it, there seemed to be a general agreement that *they* had n't lost Jasper Deed. I didn't know as I had myself, so I let it drop. But if you want to see him—" he offered, with twinkling eyes.

"No, no," she said. And then she told him—there could be no harm if she did not tell his errand—of the visit he had paid them at Mineral Springs. Vertner pricked up his ears at the first words, and, at the end of her recital, was leaning forward with his face supported between his hands, listening in unconscious absorption. As she finished, he emitted a little whistle.

"What a fellow!" he exclaimed, under his breath. "*What* a fellow! Snow so deep the drummers didn't try to get out, you say? Pass blocked! Everything battened

down for the Winter! Drifts, probably, until you couldn't rest. And that *cuss* fought his way over into the Springs and saw Deed! My! My! But there was a rustler lost to the honest paths of speculation when that remarkable young man went into the business of being a confounded scoundrel! Like to have him in partnership with me for a year with his claws cut! Wouldn't we make this old Centennial State hum! But what's become of him? That's what I want to know. I believe I *shall* have to go after him, now. We can't leave a man with all that sand to die in a snowdrift. Come to think of it, there might be a chance to reform him if we could meet in a snowdrift—he underneath, and I on top—with a whisky-flask. It would be a pretty triumph—leading him home captive, warranted kind and gentle, and trained to go in harness. What a scoundrel! I'm afraid he made Deed unhappy," he said suddenly.

Vertner had executed a circumscribed war-dance in their bed-room when Beatrice had told him of Deed's safety, on his return the night before. He had said that Deed was a fraud not to wait; and then had said that he should start for Leadville in the morning to hunt him up. He had some-

thing to tell him. But, in the morning, when Beatrice asked him if she should pack his bag, he told her that he had decided not to go—not to-day, anyway. Deed would probably find out at Leadville for himself, what he had to tell him, and it would be all the better.

Margaret's eyes filled with tears alarmingly at his suggestion, and he shyed hastily away from it, and asked her if she would n't go with them on a little picnic they had arranged for that day. They were all going to the Iron Mine. Oh, yes, certainly she would go. But there was no question about it! Margaret protested. It seemed wicked to be enjoying herself, or even to permit herself the colour of enjoyment, while Deed was away from her on such an errand. But Beatrice's assurance to Vertner that she would go, and the "talking to," which Beatrice gave her when he had left them, silenced her.

She was full of her own thoughts as she prepared for the long ride to the Iron Mine; and they were not all of Deed in Leadville.

She must meet people since she had come back. Some of those she had known during her earlier stay were sure to be of the picnic party. She must bear to guess the com-

ment that had gone on in her absence from the looks she should receive. Ah, well! She did not care. There were other things to think of. Yet she caught herself wondering if Dr. Ernfield would be riding with them to the Iron Mine. She had not dared to ask Beatrice who was going; she had not even asked how he was, though she wished much to know.

She recalled the occurrences of her former stay in Maverick, one by one. Some of them—the days of courtship for example, when Deed and she had seen each other daily, in perfect love and confidence, were sweet recollections. But others crowded these out. The morning when she had so nearly sacrificed his love for her to save him from himself, and had failed; the desolate days which followed—Ernfield, her flight, her happy flight from this house to which she had come again; these were haunting memories.

It was a beautiful day. The sun was shining with that effect of never having shone before, mingled with the sober purpose of going on shining just so for ever, which Colorado knows, and which all December picnics should arrange for. The fact that the entire sum of the grey or doubtful or

lowering days in the course of a Colorado year would not make up a fortnight, mysteriously seems not to dull the edge of one's pleasure in each new sun-soaked day. Dorothy was saying something like this to Philip, as they rode out together to meet the party. Vertner had brought Philip the news of his father's arrival in town, and had had hard work, as he told Beatrice afterwards, to restrain him from following Deed to Leadville, forthwith. It was only by representing the case to Dorothy that he had succeeded in keeping him for the picnic, he told his wife. He did not mean that he had told Dorothy anything she did not know; he had merely indicated to her the propriety of his remaining and he had remained.

Philip rode by Dorothy's side with a happy smile on his lips. His heart stirred joyously in time to the hoof-beats of their horses. To know that his father was found; to know that he must by this have learned that he had a loyal son, was cause enough for throwing up one's hat, and to turn his own trouble idle and foolish. As they rode, Dorothy would occasionally look across the space between their horses and smile with him; and at these times a gleam of intelligence, of sympathy, would light in her eyes, which seemed to

double his happiness. His head swam with it. He would not talk, and Dorothy also kept silence ; but when their eyes met Philip thought how, with every look, she endeared herself more to him, and how she must make her way into his father's heart. How his father would like her ! She should make up for many things to him. She should be a daughter to him——not in the conventional sense, but truly. He fancied her replacing Jasper in his father's heart ; he imagined her atoning for that loss, in so far as any one could. He knew that must always remain an unhealed sorrow, an incurable bitterness ; but she should console it.

When he met Margaret, for the first time, a few moments later, he seemed to see something in her face which told him that his father must already be as happy as the love of woman could make him. He had had his one glimpse of her on the staircase of the hotel at Leadville, as she was leaving it, a bride ; but her face had been veiled. He saw, instantly, that she was good. She was such a woman as he could fancy his father caring for. He saw why he had married her. These perceptions passed through his mind rapidly as he flung himself from his horse, and took her hand warmly.

Margaret had imagined this meeting. She supposed she

must speak to him; but she had intended to make it a formal matter. She could not believe him as much at fault as her husband did; but his attitude bound her, she felt; and she must be the more careful since he was not by. Poor Margaret! Her judiciousness was always a failure. It was not less so in this case, for Philip's warmth disarmed her, and with the whole party halted and looking on she could not treat him with obvious coldness. She could only say to herself that, at least, it was not Jasper. Even her husband could not feel Philip to be as much to blame as his brother. And, before she knew it, a wave of tenderness for Philip came over her, like the tenderness she had felt toward him when Deed, for so different a reason, had left her before. He was at least his son. She had not yet found courage to glance at him. She wondered if he looked like *him.* She made herself glance down into his honest eyes; and suddenly believed in him. He *was* like his father; his eyes were particularly like his. She returned his hand-clasp.

"I have hoped we should meet," he said.

"Yes!" she murmured breathlessly.

"Will you tell me how my father is? You can't know how anxious we have been about him—about you."

"He's not well. He has been—he has been troubled. You knew that he had gone on to Leadville?"

"Yes, yes! But he is coming back?"

"Soon, I hope." She lowered her eyes.

"Only soon. Then I must run up. I had hoped he would be back to-morrow. Vertner assured me that he would."

"Oh, don't do that!" she exclaimed hastily.

"Don't?" He hesitated. "Ah, you mean . . . . No, I suppose father has n't forgiven me," he said gloomily. Then with recovered buoyancy, "But that's almost part of his fineness, is n't it? If I had done what he supposes, he *ought* to hate me. But does he still—or, no, I ought n't to ask that; it is n't fair; perhaps I ought not even to have spoken to you; but I saw you. I could n't help it. You can't think what finding father again is to me—to all of us. It 's mixed up with so many things. But it does n't need to be mixed up with anything to make me glad. He's not like every father, quite, you know; he's not been at all like other fathers in his goodness to me. And he's such a *man!*"

The tone in which he said it sent a thrill leaping through her pulses, and it was hard for her not to shout what she

answered a moment later, in an agitated whisper, struggling to control herself.

"I know your father," she said. She took a hand from her rein, and offered it to him, in a torrent of feeling, for which she could find no words. He caught the hand in a grasp that hurt her as he wrung it.

"I believe you do," he said, almost reverently.

The cavalcade had passed them as they paused together. She touched her horse and, with a single glance at him, started in pursuit of the party at a gallop. Philip joined Dorothy and they cantered on slowly after the company together, talking of what had happened.

They caught up with the others in the gorge making into the hills outside the town—the gorge through which Margaret and Ernfield had once ridden on their way to the neighbouring summit. Cutter, Beatrice, Vertner, Ernfield and Mrs. Felton were among the group in advance. Margaret, who had rejoined the company before them, they perceived riding by Vertner's side. Every one, save Margaret and Ernfield, appeared in a festival mood ; and their shouts and laughter echoed from wall to wall of the gulch, and floated up into the still, keen air, like a kind of offering

to the perfection of the day. Ernfield was with Beatrice, far in advance, and they saw him stoop to her in quiet talk. Beatrice would sometimes turn in her saddle and laugh gaily at something Cutter and Mrs. Felton, who seemed to be having a pleasant time together, would call out from behind. But at these times Ernfield did not turn. Philip guessed that he was willing to avoid Margaret's eye; and Margaret, for her part, kept in the rear with Vertner. Ernfield had joined the van of the cavalcade after it was in motion, and they had not encountered yet. Both were willing to postpone the meeting.

The gulch narrowed presently, and forced them out of its bottom to a narrow path along the ledge which hung above it. Opposite them a gash in the hill, the effusion of a mass of green earth upon the rocky slope, an abandoned cabin, told the familiar story of failure, the little daily tragedy of disappointment. The memory of another mine, which was always with Philip, now, but had seemed to leave him in the happy hours since he had known his father to be found, returned upon him with a fresh pain. It was a richer mine of which he was thinking. He had been about to say to himself, more fortunate. But was it fortunate? If he

could choose would it not be his wish, now, that the ore-bearing vein in the "Little Cipher" might never have been opened? He could not wish that it should give out, now: his future had been wagered on it. But what would he not have given to know that he had dreamt the essay, the exploration of the mine, the fingering of the ore in his own hands? He wished heartily that he had never leased the mine to the Ryans, who must go blundering about and snatch a fortune out of the bowels of the earth, to show his conscience the way to the hell in which it now lived.

"Poor fellows!" said Dorothy, looking across at the deserted mine, as they rode along the path slowly, in single file. "What work, what hopes they must have put into that mine! It is hard, is n't it, to think that where one succeeds, a thousand must fail. It must be so, I suppose; but what a price for the success!"

"Do you mean that these men—the men who worked that mine—and others like them all over Colorado, and elsewhere, really pay for the lucky fellow's good fortune?" asked Philip, turning in his saddle (he was riding in advance) to look back at her. "That's a hard thought for the lucky fellow, is n't it?"

"Oh no, Philip, I did n't mean that!" She saw what he was thinking of; and hesitated a moment before trying to say just what she did mean. "It's Nature that pays. I suppose we must think that. The men will feel that they have played against Nature and lost; and that is right, too, no doubt. Some must lose; the chances are infinitely in favour of loss. Every one knows that who sinks a shaft, or digs a tunnel, I fancy. And then some must win. That is natural. The men who fail don't grudge the successes. I think they like to know of them. It is a comfort to them to know that there *is* some success somewhere. But it lays a great responsibility on the successful ones, does n't it?"

"Yes," said Philip.

They rode on in silence. The hoofs of their horses seemed to make a loud noise as they struck on the rocky path. The others had been moving more rapidly while they talked, and the hoof-beats of the animals in advance, as they died away, seemed to leave them more solitary in this lonely path between the hills than if a party had not been within hail.

"Philip," she said softly, not guessing his thoughts.

"Yes."

"Was n't it fortunate—Mr. Cutter and I were talking of it the other day—that it was the 'Little Cipher' which turned out so rich?"

"Why?" asked Philip, turning to face her again suddenly.

"Why, only think if it had been the 'Pay Ore,' and you had been obliged to give it up to your brother, after—after all that has happened, and after your making it a success. Fancy your having to think that all the work you had given to your own mine had come to nothing; and the same work in his had brought him a fortune. Fancy your having to know that *you* had done it for *him!* Why, Philip, when I think of your being forced to go to him in the face of all the wrong and suffering and insult he has heaped on you, and having to say——! B-r-r-r!" She shuddered prettily.

It had come. He felt, now, as if he had paltered and doubted and hesitated, to his shame. How could he have believed that she would not find a forgiveness in that heavenly sympathy for the means by which he had won her. These gentle words,—the first in comment on that bitter situation which had found their way to any lips—were like dew in a thirsty land to him. She must know. He would

not wrong her by another moment's shameful silence. His secret choked him. Their love seemed worthless while it remained between them.

"It *would* have been an odious position," he said with an effort at lightness. "Perhaps a man might be forgiven for shirking it."

"You mean he might send some one else to tell him?"

"No. I suppose I was thinking that he might do nothing at all."

"Wait; and let his brother find out, do you mean?"

"Well, yes; something like that!"

"But that would only be postponing it. His brother would be sure to learn of it, sooner or later. And then he would have his silence to accuse him of. If one had a brother like Jasper I don't think one would like to give him an accusation—even an accusation like that, where no real wrong would have been done him. Do you?"

"I think I should let him find out," said Philip. He was speaking with his head half turned toward her, and with one hand resting on his pony's flank behind the saddle. This kept his body swaying with the animal's forward stride. The others came into sight for a moment at a bend in the road,

and vanished again. They probably thought to do the lovers a kindness in leaving them to themselves. "Even suppose he never found out?" he pursued after a moment, as he turned and leaned forward to adjust the pony's forelock, which had not been properly smoothed under the head strap.

"But I can't imagine that. His brother would hear. He would know that the strike had been made in his mine."

"He might n't know which was his. You can imagine that, surely."

Something in his voice startled her. "Why, Philip——? But what do you mean?"

They had emerged upon a vast open green upland, and their horses by a common impulse changed their pace to a canter. The others were visible, now, far in advance, upon the road winding as far as the eye could reach between the grassy acres of the park. They cantered along side by side in the sunlight, taking the pure air of the table-land on their faces.

The interval gave Philip time. But he could not think. Her smiling face, as she glanced towards him in their

buoyant flight, daunted him. Would she smile so when he had told her? He was suddenly afraid to speak.

But as the animals fell into a walk, "Suppose his brother did n't know," he repeated; and this time she was sure of the strange inflection.

She stared at him. "It would be an awful temptation," she said under her breath. She gazed thoughtfully into his eyes. He dropped them.

"Yes," he said.

He kept his eyes upon the moving roadway. He felt her glance upon him. She was reading him. He knew it. Would she never break the silence? Then, at his side, he heard a low moan—not like Dorothy's voice—a moan of perception and reproach and heart-breaking grief.

"Oh!" she murmured desolately. "Oh-h-h!" The wail trembled from between her trembling lips; it seemed torn from her soul. She paled. He saw her sway in her saddle, and stretched out a quick hand to stay her fall. She waved him off, brokenly. "No. No. Don't! Don't, please!"

"Dorothy—" he began.

She commanded herself and looked into his eyes again

with a look of love and longing and despair, with a face of sorrow and indignation, and scorn and pity which shook his heart.

"How could you!" she cried in a stifled voice, through the tears that began to come. "How *could* you!"

"It was for you," he said.

"For *me!* Oh, Philip, don't say it!"

"But for whom else, for what else? You can't think that I would do it only for money, for revenge! It was for you—only for you!"

"And you think that makes it better! Oh, what can you have imagined me! How little—little you have understood me. Better! Oh, Philip!" she choked.

"It was a question between losing you and doing it. I did it. It was wrong, it was wicked, it was base if you like. You may think what you will of it. I don't defend it. But I did it for you. And I would do it again."

"Don't!" she cried again, shrinking away from him. "Oh, no one could accuse you as you accuse yourself. Knowing this—this thing that you have let yourself do to be all you say, how—oh, Philip, *how* could you stain our—our love with it! I don't know what you mean. How

could it have been? Did I make you do this!" she cried suddenly. She stretched out her hand toward him. "Was it my folly, or vanity, in letting Jasper go on, that forced you to it—that seemed to give this a reason?" Philip shook his head. "Oh no, no! Of course it could n't have been that. But why—?" She stopped short. "What difference can it make! It's done! It's done! And for me—for our love. Oh, how could you hope that any happiness could be bought with such wrong! Can't you see how it soils and degrades and shames every moment that we have ever had with each other? Can't you see how it must kill me to think that we have come by all that has seemed so sweet and precious and good through a fraud—through a trick."

"No," said Philip stoutly, "I don't see that. I won't see it. If we really love each other, *that* counts! But nothing else counts. I can make this right. I have taken. I can restore." He said it, though he knew otherwise. "Why, Dorothy, no one knows. And no one can ever know. I see that you look on me as a common robber. But it's not so. They were both my mines. Jasper sent me money to work a claim for him. The money went into the

common fund. I don't know which of the two mines it was used for. I shall never know. When I began to work with his money I said to myself that I should look upon the 'Little Cipher' as his. But both still belonged to me. I did all the work on them. They only existed through the work I directed upon them. Jasper never thought anything of his chances at Piñon. It was like giving a man $500 to place on a horse for you: or to buy a lottery ticket with. And I thought so little of the chances, one way or the other, after the first month, that I swear to you it was never in my thoughts which claim was his, and which was mine. Legally they were both mine. In fact they *were* both mine, not only for all practical purposes, but actually. For Jasper had never *bought* anything from me. He had given me some money to expend in working a claim." Dorothy opened her mouth, but he went on with a gesture, "Yes, I know. It's true. Don't suppose I shirked the truth for a moment. The difference is no difference. In my conscience Jasper was the owner of the 'Little Cipher,' and all that might come from it. He is so yet. I don't dispute it. It has never been present in my mind in any other way since the temptation to keep silence and let him take

the other for his, came upon me. Since you must judge me, it is fair that you should know how it has been with me. If it is worse to have done what I did knowingly, I tell you freely that I did it in the face of the knowledge that not all the deeds and registrations and formal evidence of ownership in the world could make Jasper more the owner of the 'Little Cipher' than he was through my word to myself. I know it; but I did it—I must n't tell you why or how—for you." His voice dropped, and as their horses went slowly along, he leaned over, and took the hand she had let fall by her side. "Does that count for nothing with you, Dorothy?"

She had been listening to him wearily, wonderingly—hoping against hope that he could excuse himself; that he could make the obvious wrong seem right. But at this she started as if waking herself from a sleep, and answered, "Oh, for too much! Too much!" She released her hand quietly. Philip felt a shock go through him. "Every word you say makes it a more impossible thing for *you* to have done, Philip. And to do it, above all, in the name of our love! You had an opportunity such as comes to a man in a thousand. You could have been strong; you could have turned from that awful temptation, and I should have

loved you for it as women have loved heroes and martyrs. I understand the temptation. It was cruel—even leaving all this miserable thought of me out of it, it was horribly cruel. I said how it would seem very hard to do right in such a case. That was my first thought. But oh, Philip, can you think that it makes it easier for me to think you have failed—to know that it was hard! Because the right is hard the wrong is not good—is it? And surely the right is dearer for being difficult! Any man might have resisted if it had not been bitter to be strong. Only such a man as I have believed you, could be great enough for the noble thing that was open to you."

"Stop! Stop!" he cried, in pain.

"No, let me speak now, please. The truth is better. Oh, Philip," she cried, "when I think of you with those two mines in your possession, with the knowledge that one of them held a fortune, and that the other was a mere opening in the ground; and when I think of you with the other knowledge that the one that held a fortune was your brother's, for your conscience, and the empty one, still only for your conscience, belonged to you, and that no one knew this—*no one!*"—she drew a deep breath—"when I think

of that, and remember that that brother had wronged you to the death; that he had made it seem right to rob him by robbing you; that he had driven your father to desperation, and brought you to poverty—when I think of all those things, and see the splendid, generous, heroic right you might have done, and have to know that you chose to do *this*—oh, if I could have died before I knew it!"

A convulsive sob escaped her. She pressed her cheeks rapidly and repeatedly with her handkerchief. When she looked at him again it was with streaming eyes. "Say you were not in your right mind—that you did it in error! Say anything rather than leave me to believe what I must! It *was n't* you! Oh, Philip! Was not the man I have known you for too proud? Would he not have seen how the very security with which he might take, and keep silence, forced him to hold his hand? And would he not have felt, proudly, that every one's ignorance of his duty, and the infinite delicacy that ignorance forced upon him—yes, that the mere thread which bound him must be stronger for him than the strongest bond, because it bound him to himself? Oh, Philip, say you did n't do it!"

"I can't! I can't!" he cried. "It's true!"

She gazed at him with eyes of unspeakable reproach ; and he dropped the eyes he had fixed upon hers while she spoke with the fascination of a criminal who hears his sentence. The party in advance had almost disappeared. The wide plain, hemmed in by hills, seemed a world in which he and she alone existed.

She checked her horse and held out her hand. "Good-bye, then."

"Good-bye?" he exclaimed, stupefied.

"Did you think we could go on?" she asked, sadly. "Did you think it could all be as it was? No. It is ended for us. Good-bye," she repeated. The tears fell from her eyes in a rain, but there was no relenting in her face. "Give me my ring," she said dully.

He stared. "Dorothy!" he burst out. "You can't! You won't."

"I must!"

"I have wronged Jasper. I confess it. Nothing that he has done excuses it. It makes it worse. I own it. But I can right that. I will. Dorothy! Surely—surely this need not touch us!"

"Oh, what do I care for Jasper?" she cried in misery.

"It is for you I care, and you have lost yourself to me. It is n't the wrong to him! It is the wrong to yourself, to me, to all that we—to all that has been. . . . Oh, is it for me to show you such a thing? You have murdered our love! All the atonements in the world can't change that!"

She buried her face in her hands. Her horse stamped an impatient foot, and swung his head free of the rein.

"You despise me! You hate me! I see *that!*" exclaimed Philip. "But you sha'n't throw me off! You sha'n't raise me to such a happiness as you have let me know to cast me back! You should have thought of that before you stretched out your hand to lift me up. You should have known that I am not made of the stuff that bears. I can't bear this! I won't! Dorothy, girl,"—his voice fell to the note of tenderness—"I can't do without you. You have taught me not to be able to do without you. You won't do this thing. Oh, my God, could I live and know that you were lost to me—and lost through Jasper? Have you thought of that? Can you think that I could bear to know that, after all that has gone and passed, it is Jasper who parts us? You see how it can't be!"

"Give me my ring, please," she said, not coldly, or hardly, but resolutely.

He tore it from his finger. "As you wish!" he said with blazing eyes. And then, with cold courtesy, "You won't want me to go on with you. I will wait here until I see you with the rest."

"Oh, Philip," she trembled. She reached out her hand.

He would not see it. He leaned forward and gave her the reins she had allowed to slip from her. He lifted his sombrero.

"Good-bye," he said coldly.

She gave one glance at him. Her mouth twitched pitifully. Then she struck the pony a sharp blow with her quirt. The beast leaped forward.

Philip watched her steadfastly until she had melted into the dust cloud which indicated the position of the picnic party. He knit his brow upon his straining eyes and bit his lip fiercely as he gazed. When he had seen the last of her he whirled his horse, and dug his spurs into the animal's flanks with a wild sob of pain.

CHAPTER VII

VERTNER took the picnic party over the entire Iron Mine, inexorably, when they came to it. They watched the drilling, a blasting was set off for them, they rode in the ore-cars; they clambered down ladders into black pits, where only the candles lighted them, they clambered up again; they crouched and crawled and stumbled after their guide through galleries and passages which never ended: and four of the party were conscious of it all. Dorothy and Margaret and Ernfield and Cutter were thinking of other things.

Margaret sat down in her old room, when she was back again that evening, and wrote Deed a long letter, begging him to return; and tore it up.

Dorothy, on her return, found her father in his study chair. She curled her arms about him, and asked him

without preface if he would not give up his charge at once, and leave Maverick—for ever. The blood tingled in his veins, and he drew a long breath. The relief of receiving the proposal at last from her silenced all speech for a moment. He had paltered with the need of breaking it to her, he had postponed the evil day through the forbearance of the Bishop, with the fear of what she must feel, of what she must say; and while he waited, the difficulty was solved for him. He was too happy in the fact for the instant to question occasions or causes.

"Why, I don't know, Dorothy," he said, endeavouring to hide his pleasure, "if you don't like Maverick, I dare say I should find reasons for not liking it, too. In fact, now I think of it, I've been impatient and restless here for some time. Yes, dear," he said, patting her hand, "since you wish it, let us go."

"How good you are, Papa! I knew you would say so. And where shall we go?"

"Why, that's for you to say, partly, is n't it?"

"But I can't call you to a new parish. I'm not a vestry or a church committee. I wish I were. You would have ten thousand a year for your salary, and have all the things

you have to go without now—poor Papa!—and never do anything you did n't want to."

"What a picture! But I thought we were all to revel in something of that sort, without the assistance of church vestries, in that fine future of your own that you've planned. I never consented to it, you know. I never agreed to play the part you've assigned me in your drama of two happy people and another."

"Oh, don't speak of that, Papa!" she cried, stooping over him, and burying her face. "Don't speak of it!"

"Why—why—" he exclaimed, in alarm, "what is the matter, my girl! Have you and Philip been——? What is it? Tell me, child?" A stern and impatient note came into his voice.

"Oh, I can't tell you! It is n't anything that I can tell."

"Nonsense, Dorothy! Don't make all this trouble about a lovers' quarrel, child! Do you suppose two lovers never quarrelled before?"

She lifted her tear-stained face from his breast, and looked in her father's eyes, as she said: "This is not a quarrel." A look passed over her face such as she might have given Philip if he had been before her—grieving and

miserable, but proud, self-contained, resolute. Her father did not understand it.

"Oh," he said, relieved. "Well then, don't let him suppose it is!" He rose and lit a cigar. Dorothy stared at him from the seat which she kept on the arm of his chair. "Don't play with a man, Dorothy. It is n't nice," —he blew out the first slender whiff of smoke contemplatively, as he brushed a speck of lint from the new clerical coat to which he had treated himself since he had been at ease about the future,—"and it is n't fair. It's even unwise when a girl is making a marriage so fortunate and desirable in every way as yours." He frowned slightly.

Dorothy raised her eyes and looked into his. "You don't understand, Papa," she said quietly. "I shall never marry Mr. Deed."

CUTTER went to Ira's, Ernfield's office, the Vertners, and finally to the Maurices on his return, without finding a trace of Philip. He thought the clergyman's replies to his inquiries short. He stabled his horse, and walked about the town, looking for him.

The shops were still open, and men and women paused before them to price the goods displayed outside, or went into the vividly lighted interiors, where the arc light glowed and glared. Trade was going on listlessly. It was near the end of the month, the pay-car was still to come up from Denver, and the railway *employés* of all grades awaited the monthly guest. The hands at the mines, and the cow-punchers were paid off at the same time, in order to keep the festival which followed pay-day, and which disorganized the town in the process of enriching it, within as narrow limits as possible. The lull that precedes a *fête* therefore lay over Maverick. Only two-thirds of the electric lamps were turned on; but there was nevertheless more light than noise. Suddenly a clatter of hoofs sounded above the vague and leisurely murmur of the quiet thoroughfare, and those on the sidewalk turned at sight of a horse ridden at a furious pace. No one save Cutter recognized the rider. The hoofs hammered across the bridge leading to the hotel; and Cutter followed hastily. The whistle of the night train sounded down in the valley at the moment, borne for miles through the clear air. Philip was standing at the

bar of the hotel, draining a stiff glass. As Cutter laid his hand upon his arm he raised his eyes and regarded him strangely. He motioned to the bar-tender for another glass. Cutter shook his head; he looked anxiously into his friend's face.

"Where have you been?"

"To the devil—to Jasper." His voice was hoarse, and his black eyes stared from his haggard face with the effect of a man long ill. The train whistled again, nearer. Philip swallowed what remained of the spirits in his glass at a gulp. "Come, I'm off." He gathered his change from the counter, and made a rush for the door, as the train roared into the station. Cutter caught his arm at the door.

"Hold on, man! You're mad!"

Philip turned a weary face upon him. He smiled sadly. "Yes," he said.

"You're not well. It's crazy to be careering over the country in your state. Come back with me to the 'Snow Find' and go to bed and behave yourself."

"Oh, I'll behave myself. That's what I'm doing now. I've dropped the other thing. Come along." He made for the train, Cutter following him.

"See here. You're not going to take this train. You're a sick man, I tell you."

Philip gave him his weary smile again as he put his foot on the first step of the Pullman. "Yes, Cutter, I'm a sick man, fast enough, but not in the way you mean. I've got to go to Piñon. It won't hurt me. Come along if you don't believe me."

Cutter gazed up at him for a moment, where he stood on the platform above him, in helpless perplexity. Then he said, "You know what you are?"

Philip laughed, almost with pleasure. "Yes, I know."

"Just stay there, then, till I get a ticket."

The full moon was flooding the valley as the train ran out toward the mountains—beaming virginally, in this crystalline atmosphere, through a medium no grosser than its own. The purity of the air gave a new effect of luminosity, of splendour and abundance to the great lamp swinging aloft. It was light distilled; the air was not conscious of it. It fixed the valley under its cold, bare, hard gaze, etching the circling hills against the sky with a finger dipped in light, which seemed to bound, to outline, to select, and finally, as one looked, to detach it all from neighbouring

sky and earth, and catch it away into that strange effect of being a picture which we know in all memorable scenes.

They began to climb into the recesses of the hills after the swift run through the valley. The opposite range of mountains was behind them, and as the young men looked out in silence from the windows of the compartment they had taken together in the Pullman, a liquid tract of radiance shone on their eyes from time to time far away ; it was the snow, crusted in molten reaches along the mountain sides. Beside the silvery lakes of crust what one knew by day for the wooded hollows of the lower slopes were black mysteries under the light.

Philip turned from the scene with a heavy sigh.

"You can catch the 9.47 back from Barker's," he said suddenly, catching the eye of Cutter, who faced him from the opposite seat. "You must n't think of coming along with me."

"I have an errand of my own, over the range. Don't bother about me."

"Come ! No nonsense ! "

"I have, I tell you ! "

"Oh, well ! " He dropped the question listlessly.

"I say, old man, what's the matter?" Cutter laid a hand on his knee.

"The devil's the matter," groaned Philip. "What do you suppose?"

"I don't know. Jasper?"

"No, sir. It is n't Jasper. I'm sick of that pretence. I cheated myself with the idea that it was Jasper when I let myself do the thing. But it was n't. It was I."

"I don't believe it."

"Well, anyway, it's I who suffer for it."

"I see that," returned Cutter, gently. "But how? Why?"

"Because I'm not the fine fellow I have liked to think myself—not even the fine fellow you think me. I'm not a fine fellow at all, Cutter; and I've done a low thing."

"Pshaw!"

"Is it lofty to abuse a woman's confidence, then? Is it admirable to rob a man who has trusted you?"

"What have you done?" asked his friend, quietly.

"I've taken a mine which does n't belong to me because I could, and because the man to whom it belongs had done me a wrong, and wanted to marry the girl I wanted to marry. Is that plain?"

"The 'Little Cipher'?" stammered Cutter. "Jasper?"

Philip nodded.

"But see here——" began Cutter.

"Oh, there's nothing to say!" cried Philip. "A man is one thing or the other. I'm the other. She despises me. She hates me!"

"Why?"

"Why!"

"Yes, why? Does she know what Jasper has done?"

"Yes. But she knows what I have done. Nothing else makes any difference. It can't to a woman, and probably that shows it should n't to any one." He told him of Maurice's situation; he explained his temptation, palliating nothing. "I thought the wrong Jasper had done me made my wrong right," he said. "It did n't. It only made a new one with separate consequences. I thought my love for her justified it; to her that seemed the damning touch. I believe she could have forgiven my villainy; but not that—not that! I fought it; I would n't see; I took my stand upon our love; I made her suffer as much as I knew how, and parted from her in anger. But all the time I felt her contempt scorching through me. When I got away from her it was more than I

could bear. I hunted up Jasper, when I found he was back, and turned over the mine to him, as I ought to have done the first minute I heard of the strike."

"What?"

"You would n't have had me keep it, I hope?"

"I know, Deed. But owning up to Jasper——?"

"I did n't say I liked it. I was pursued by the thought of her scorn, I tell you. Do you think I could bear to know that she despised me, and that she was right? I had to do something. If she ever hears of it, she will know that I tried to do what I could."

"Yes, yes," cried Cutter impatiently. "But the humiliation!"

"Have I deserved to please my pride? Jasper was a blackguard, as usual; but there were two of us this time. It seemed to help the business along."

"And you've told him?"

Philip nodded; but at Cutter's look, "Oh don't ask me what he said!" exclaimed he. "It was a damnable scene. The fellow is ill; coming back from his journey he was caught in a blizzard; for three days he was under a rock, in the snow; he's in a bad way. He got up in bed; he raved. Ernfield came in and I went. I looked back at him at the

door ; and he nodded to me with a gloating smile. I know what he means. He has me, now. I've put myself in the wrong. All that has gone before—all that led up to this, is cancelled. He'll take his opportunity. It's all right."

He buried his face moodily in his hands. Cutter sat silent. He opened his lips to speak once or twice, and found nothing to say. The moon, which had been hidden since they had entered the gorge between the hills, and set out on their climb to the summit, gleamed suddenly upon a field of snow, lying high betwixt the mountains into which they were steaming up. It shone into their windows and filled the dusky compartment with radiance.

Cutter began to speak in a low voice. He said Jasper would do nothing ; he did n't doubt his will, but nothing was open to him ; and he went on to tell his friend that he exaggerated the enormity of what he had done. " You say that you've always looked on the ' Little Cipher ' as Jasper's," he said. " But we've only your word for it—and your word for a mental process so intangible that even you can't say when or how the ' Little Cipher ' became Jasper's mine, or by what process it ceased to be his and became yours." And he added that whatever might be true about this, surely the provocation made a difference ; surely it

counted that it was done against one man rather than another. He did n't see why he should concern himself much about anything done against Jasper.

He believed some of this; but not enough to enable him to face Philip, as he stared at him with a miserable smile a moment before he muttered, "Rot! rot! rot! Very kind of you, Cutter, but no good! I can't deceive myself with such notions as that. It makes no difference, though. If you want to console me, don't talk about Jasper. I can get over that part of it myself. It's the other—Oh, Cutter, can't you see it's the *other* that matters? It's that I have done it against *her*! I thought if she cared for me she would pardon it because I had done it *for* her. Crazy fool! Not to see how it abused all her trust in me; how it must wound her at her tenderest; how it must profane all our relation. She will never forgive me. She hates me. She despises me."

He rose with a groan, and took a restless turn within the narrow space of the compartment, throwing his arms wide, and letting them fall again in despair. Suddenly he stood still and faced his friend. "My God, man! Do you know what that means?"

CHAPTER VIII

MARGARET went to call on Dorothy the next morning. She had been thinking a great deal about her since the day before. All forms of misery seemed especially grievous to her just now; and useless forms of it seemed merely wicked. She had heard nothing from Deed, but there had not been time; he had telegraphed to let her know of his arrival, and had promised to telegraph again as soon as he had anything to communicate. The dread in which she awaited this message created in her, for the moment, a need to befriend some one else's sorrow. She felt a certain shyness. She had been conscious in their earlier meetings of the vague hesitation about her which Dorothy had tried to conceal. But she would not allow this to make a difference.

She found the house upturned when she arrived at the Maurices'. Dorothy came into the little parlour after a

moment, apologizing for her appearance; she was in the disarray of the house-uniform in which she was accustomed to attack the heavier household problems. She kept on her apron. Margaret, glancing at her, saw the traces of tears on her cheeks.

"I have come——" she began, doubtfully. Her slow eye for such things showed her suddenly the pictures packed and standing in ranks against the wall, the upturned carpet, the dismantled walls, and swathed furniture. "But are you moving?"

"Yes; there is no reason why I should not tell you, Mrs. Deed. Papa has sent in his resignation." She met her interlocutor's eyes for the moment as if with the intention of putting some face upon the action. Margaret was the first to whom she had been obliged to make the announcement; put into words it sounded barren; she saw that she had unconsciously relied on her father to front the inquiring world with an excuse. She found none for herself, and dropped her eyes before Margaret's clear, kind gaze.

Margaret's own thought leaped to its decision with its habitual certainty where Deed was not concerned. Dorothy was sitting on the sofa; Margaret rose quickly and came

and stood in front of her. "Won't you let me help you?" she said.

"About moving?" asked Dorothy, with troubled eyes. "Oh, there 's nothing! Thank you very much, of course! But we have so little."

"I did n't mean about moving, though I should be glad if you *would* let me do anything for you in that, if you must go. But you had better stay. I was thinking about——" She sat down on the sofa beside her, and stole her hand upon Dorothy's. "Listen," she said, in a low voice, "I am in deep trouble— I, too—the deepest. Won't you let me help you?"

The sudden tears started to Dorothy's eyes. "But how?" she stammered. "But why?"

"He is near to me as well as to you, you know. It seems to give me a sort of right to speak. But perhaps you won't think that. Perhaps it hurts you to have it spoken of. I know—trouble is like that; we wish to keep it to ourselves. But it's better shared, is n't it? It might be needless; it so often is. It's hard to be wise, but we may be quite sure of that—don't you think so—that needless additions to the misery of the world are wrong? And even

if it must remain all the trouble it seems to one's self, it is good to let another feel part of the ache with one. It somehow helps."

Dorothy listened with averted face; she kept her glistening eyes on the opposite wall; she pressed the kindly hand as Margaret went on. When she finished she seized it, turning to face her, and gazed into her eyes for a moment through a mist of tears.

"Oh, you are good," she murmured, chokingly. "I am very unhappy!"

She sobbed out her story in Margaret's lap. They remained a long time when she had done in each other's arms. "I see how you feel. It is hard," murmured Margaret, drying her eyes. "But you must forgive him!"

The fair head on her shoulder was shaken violently. "Yes, yes," said Margaret, gently, "you must, and you will." She felt herself very old in the presence of this violent young passion; she felt rich in the abundance of her experience, and the richer because it was so recent. "You love him, don't you?"

Dorothy raised her head and regarded her in a kind of amazement.

"Then you will forgive him," said Margaret, quickly. "Things don't matter so much as we think. I have learned that. One thing matters—only one! And you may be sure he has his excuses if you could know them. My husband is suffering from a wrong he believes he did him; we have been very confident about it; but since I have seen him I have doubted. We must both wait. Why, you saw him! You heard him! His honest eyes, that true voice—I don't believe he's false; not intentionally; not wickedly; not without excuse."

"Oh, don't! Don't!"

"Yes, I know. If he is false, in spite of all that, it's the worse—infinitely the worse. But be sure he would have something to say if you would give him his opportunity."

"He has had it; it is he who has condemned himself. It was from his own lips. Don't think—please don't think that I would believe any one else about him!"

Margaret observed her irresolutely, a little dashed. Her will to help her was unaltered, but she had not the habit of quick resource.

"He said that he had taken his brother's mine?" she repeated.

"Yes, yes. He said—how little men understand!—that he did it for *me!* That was his excuse!"

"Yes," said Margaret, slowly, "I know what you mean. I can see how that would seem the worst pain of all; and yet, don't you see, too," she added, meditatively, "how perhaps it *is* an excuse, and if an excuse at all, the best?" She put this forward doubtfully.

Dorothy shook her head. "Oh, don't you think I have tried to believe that? Don't you think I tried to give him opportunities to excuse himself, to make it seem right? and that I have done my best to excuse him to myself since? Sometimes I have made myself believe that if I could n't pardon his doing it for me, I ought to pardon him because it was done against his brother; it was a cruel position. But that makes it only worse—a thousand times worse—does n't it?" She asked it as a question. Margaret was silent. "Does n't it?" she repeated.

"Yes. No. Perhaps. Do you know what his brother had done to him? Do you know it all?"

"Oh, yes, yes! It was very hard. But that's what I mean—it was *so* hard that it was for him all the more to hold his hand. It was his privilege *not* to strike. It seems

to me no one ever had such an opportunity. And to use it as he did——! Oh, there is no excuse—none. The excuses only make it more wrong; they make it impossible to forgive."

Margaret bit her lip. She did not know what to say. But she reached out her hand suddenly, and said in a low voice, "If you have no excuse for him, think how much less he can have one for himself. Have you thought of that? Does n't it seem as if it almost *forced* you to forgive him? Think how he must be suffering! Remember, he loves you too! Think how his love must be making it a torture for him that you should think of him as you do, and that you are right."

"Yes, I have thought of that. I have thought of everything. But nothing helps. It is done, done! If he loved me"—a sob caught at her throat—"if he loved me, it ought to have been a reason for him against this,—this that he has done. It's not a reason to forgive him—I can't feel it. I have prayed to feel it. I have prayed——" Her voice died away. She avoided her companion's eye.

Margaret looked at her longingly, tenderly, helplessly; and Dorothy gave back her gaze. In Margaret's plain,

wholesome face, in her genuine eyes, in the wide, clear benignant brow, Dorothy read goodness and strength—nothing but goodness and strength. The primness and precision she had been used to fancy in her, seemed resolved into these; the qualities which she had been used to wish that Margaret would let her like in her seemed somehow to have freed themselves from the old bondage; she saw that she had in some way misconstrued or wrongly imagined her—or perhaps she was changed; perhaps experience had taught her. Did one come to see things differently, then, in time—did one's way of looking at certain matters alter? Should she ever think differently of Philip?

Margaret, on her side, was looking into Dorothy's eyes, thinking how gentle and sweet, and true and right-minded she was; but thinking too, that in a way, a very remote way, she stood where she had once stood; where one saw the right so clearly, that one was in danger of not seeing all the pity of the wrong; where it was hard to forgive. The cases were not at all the same: it was the youth that spoke in Dorothy, of course—the intense, impulsive, passionately certain youth; and it was not youth, whatever else it was, that had worked in herself to the same ends. But, at all

events, she felt drawn to her by a mysterious bond of sympathy ; she felt that she knew enough of her state of mind to comprehend, to smypathize, and she yearned to say certain things to the young girl beside her ; but she found no words for them. Even about Philip's offence itself (a simple and concrete subject) she could not trust herself to speak ; she wished only to say what should be quite, quite true. She could not let herself comfort Dorothy against her own conscience about what Philip had seemingly done ; if he had done it, it was hateful and wicked to her ; yet there was another point of view. . . . . Perhaps Margaret was less entirely illumined by her experience than she thought ; perhaps none of us escape out of ourselves, through any experience, beyond recall.

She rose at last, and Dorothy rose with her. "I don't know what to say," she said. "I'm not sure what it would be right to say. I am not sure of anything, any more. But you will let me come to see you again, I hope, and we can talk."

"Oh, come! Pray come," begged Dorothy, taking her hand.

"And you won't move, yet. You will wait?"

Dorothy seemed to take an inventory of the dismantled room and of the situation in her swift glance. "I see what

you mean," she said, in a moment. "But I dare n't say that. The thought of seeing him again, of meeting him—you don't know what it is to me. I know I'm not reasonable about it. But I feel as if I must go away. I feel as if we should only be happy again—father and I—and get back to our old good times together before—before he came, by going to some place a long way off, and very different from this. And father has sent in his resignation—he would n't like to recall it." She pressed her companion's hand. "It is so good of you to come—to care. You won't think me ungrateful if I can't see it quite as you see it—not yet, at all events."

"Oh, I don't know how I see it!" exclaimed Margaret hastily. "I am the last person you should trust to; I make a great many mistakes; I am not wise. I used to be very certain: but things have happened to alter that lately. I am not sure of anything—but—but perhaps this is true,—that, if we have charge of men's ideals, as men say, we must n't be too hard in judging them by them. If we love them we must wish to help them back to them, I think, when they fall; and, at all events, I don't think it can be wrong for us to remember always that they have to do their

good and evil in a different world from ours—a world we don't understand, perhaps." She gazed over Dorothy's shoulder, with a far-away look in her eyes, in which she seemed to herself to be questioning and resolving her own future.

"But right and wrong remain—surely they are the same in all worlds," said Dorothy, bewildered by this strain of reasoning from Margaret. "And our loving—that seems to me just it! It does n't matter that some one for whom we care nothing does a thing beneath him. When—when another does it——" She did not finish.

"I don't know—I don't know," mused Margaret, with the same far-looking eyes. "It's true, of course; but it's not all the truth—or, at least, there is a better truth, perhaps. Love is better." She bent over and kissed her, "Good-bye!" she said.

Dorothy watched her go away with many feelings.

CHAPTER IX.

MARGARET'S way home took her by Dr. Ernfield's office, and, as she passed, she heard a rap on the window. Beatrice's face appeared at the pane, and she went in, at her silent gesture. They encountered in the outer office, where Beatrice whispered that Dr. Ernfield was ill. His long ride of the day before, followed by a night of watching at Jasper's bedside had brought on another hæmorrhage.

"Is Jasper back, then? Is he ill?" she asked quickly.

"Yes, he's back, and he's very ill," returned Beatrice; and in a hushed voice she told her of the blizzard in which he had been caught on his way back over the mountains from Mineral Springs; how he had spent three days without food or drink under an overhanging rock, dying slowly of exhaustion, cold, and hunger, and how he had at length

been found by a lumber team going up Ohkay valley for a load. The men had taken him into the town of Ohkay, and he had been laid up at the hotel there until now.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Margaret. "Poor fellow! I wish I could go out and nurse him. Is he alone?"

"He has his cowboys."

"Cowboys!" cried she. "No; I must n't," she added after a moment's meditation. "But how like Dr. Ernfield to sit up with him. Tell me," she said, laying a hand on her companion's arm, "—— he is better?"

"Yes, he's better; but he has been very ill. Ned is going to take his place with Jasper, and I'm going to ask you to take my place with him for a moment. I left Edward in the irrigating ditch. He will be wet through."

Margaret was about to say that she could n't stay; that it was impossible; but this seemed foolish, on reflection. She put off her shawl on a chair in the outer office, and went in to him, while Beatrice silently gathered her wraps in the inner room. Beatrice hushed her entrance into the room where he lay, with her finger on her lip. He was asleep, she saw. So much the better!

Beatrice indicated the medicine he was to take next with

her finger, whispered one or two further instructions and glided out, saying she would be back immediately. Margaret gave a quick glance about the untidy, mannish room. This, then, was where he lived. There was an unframed medical print or two, and some stuffed specimens. The walls were almost bare, save in the corners, where they were cobwebbed. Margaret could never have lived for a moment in a dishevelled room. The desolateness of this one gave her a pang of homesickness for him. She saw that the fire was dying down, and looked about for wood. He stirred uneasily as she softly put on a log, and opened his eyes on her. She rose quickly. His bewildered stare broke into a smile. "Have you taken Mrs. Vertner's place?" he asked. His voice was quite strong. Perhaps, she thought to herself—perhaps he would yet live to conquer his disease, and to take his place in life with the others. She knew that this could not be—that it was impossible; but the other seemed too dreadful. They faced each other alone for the first time since the day they had ridden up the Ute Trail together.

"It is good to see you again," he said, as he put forth his wasted hand. She took it and held it a moment silently, as

she gazed out of the window, thinking of many things. The sunlight was pouring into the little space of Mesa Street, on which Ernfield's rooms looked. From where she stood she could see the office of the *Maverick Sentinel*, which she recalled as the name of the paper she had cause to remember. The days following Deed's going returned to her, as she stood looking out at the sign and holding his hand, and it came to her that it was Ernfield, in a way, whom she had to thank for her husband and for her happiness.

The wind hid the office of the newspaper, and "St. Ann's Rest" and the Post Office next door, when it raised, as it did from time to time, a mighty cloud of dust. Women who were walking would sometimes pause before one of these gusts, and turn their backs, burying their faces in their muffs. The men often wore protecting goggles or glasses, and seemed to take the wind and dust as part of the circumstance of the universal Joke.

As she stole a glance at his face again and saw in his look the illusory brightness and vitality of the consumptive, grave and silent tears started in her eyes.

"I sha'n't be so sorry not to get well, after all," he said, suddenly, observing her from under his half-closed eyes.

She looked, he thought, even more than she usually did, the benignant goddess of all right-doing. He was conscious of an absurd wonder whether she must dress her hair in that way because she was herself, or whether she had to be herself, having once brushed those silky brown strands back from her forehead in that severe fashion. He was as much at a loss to say why he liked her way of parting her hair uncompromisingly from forehead to crown, without a decoration or extrusion of any sort, and smoothing it simply down to the ears, where it curled back in a way that made him long to tell her how utterly nice she was, as he was at a loss to say why he liked her—why he loved her, in fine, to his madness, his torment. "I sha'n't be so sorry not to get well," he repeated, "because by the time I could get well, Mrs. Vertner and you would have spoiled me past remedy. I should n't be able to resume my place in society, decently. No one would be able to tolerate me. If you really want me to have courage to get well, you'd better go before it's too late." She answered him with an indulgent smile only.

"Ah, well!" he went on. "It's little matter, either way. The game will soon be up." He put away the instinctive denial that leaped to her lips, with a gesture. "Don't

say it," he asked her. "There's no need." A whimsical little groan escaped him as he shifted his position. He stared at her in far away thought. She moved uneasily. He caught her hand. "I thought I could die without asking it. But it can't hurt you—my question—not from a man who has his death-warrant. Tell me—are you happy?"

She gazed down into his eyes a moment doubtfully. She felt herself choking; she nodded painfully.

"Ah, that's good!" he exclaimed, "good! And it's true?"—he turned a keen glance on her—"everything is well with you?"

She shook her head.

He regarded her for a moment thoughtfully. "May I guess your trouble?" he asked, with a deepening of the kindly note in his voice. She said nothing. "Jasper told me a long story when I was called to him last night."

He told her what she already knew about the origin of Jasper's illness, and how, in the watches of the night, as he sat by his bedside, he had poured into his ears the whole narrative of his relation to his father and Philip. Margaret flushed; how much did he know?

"It must have been very hard for you," she heard him saying.

"How? What?" she asked, startled.

"All of it. You can't think how it came over me, sitting there in the dark with him—what you must have suffered. I have never known anything of it all. I have fancied things, now and then, of course, but I have always liked to believe you happy, and I did n't allow myself to fancy much. The truth is worse than my fancies. It must have been very hard for you," he repeated.

"It hasn't always been easy," she owned.

"Ah, if I could forget the time I tried to make it harder!"

"Don't think that, please. It was you who made everything plain. It was you who helped me. Why,"—she hesitated—"I don't know why I should n't say it. I owe you my happiness."

"Do you?" He reached up and took her hand again. "Do you?" he repeated. "You don't. You must n't. But perhaps you may, too, if you like," he added with his smile. "Leave the idea with me for a while. I sha'n't need it long, and it will do me good. Yes," he said happily to

himself, "I could go away with that thought. You'd better not stay. You'll take it back."

"But it's true!"

"Is it? Well, no matter. I like it just as well false. Your seeing it that way—that's all that counts. And about the happiness—you manage to find it in spite of what we were talking of just now? If I've given it to you, I want more than ever to know that I gave you the genuine article."

"Yes; in spite of that and—some other things, I think I may say I'm happy. Or at least I should n't know how to choose any way to be happier."

"There *are* other things?"

"Nothing that we shall not solve at once and have done with for ever. Whatever comes we have that comfort, now."

A shadow passed over his face at that tiny world-including, world-excluding "we"; but he repeated fervently "Good! Good!"

He saw her eyes light suddenly with a light that he had not brought into them. She went to the window and rapped briskly upon it. A figure on the other side of the street turned at the sound, and recognizing the face at the window came quickly across the road.

"Excuse me if I leave you a moment," she said, and turned at the door, with a beaming face, to add, as she nodded toward him, "We shall know now!"

When she had opened the office door to Deed she drew him in, and folded him in her arms, and then held him off and questioned his face, reading the good news in his smile with greedy eyes. Ernfield in the next room turned wearily to the wall. She found him so when she ran in for a moment to see that all was well with him. Then she returned and questioned Deed. She saw before he spoke that he was very happy; his face had taken on a radiant look. It was like the face of the man she had known in the year before their marriage. She was conscious for the first time how old and worn she had grown used to seeing him look; he was not looking old now; he was looking young and buoyant. Beatrice came in upon them before he could give her his news, and Deed must greet her, and Margaret must show her the last medicine that Ernfield had taken, and must linger a moment alone by his bedside to say, leaning over him as she buttoned her gloves, "I came to help you, and you have comforted me. It was always the way. Some day you must let me change it: you don't

know how much I should like to feel that I had the advantage of you in that, even for a moment. I should like to help you."

He stretched up his hand to her; she noted with pain how frail and thin it seemed. "You *are* my help," he said with a sad, eager smile. "I think you know that. It is you who make things possible for me."

A sudden flood of compassion filled Margaret's heart as she looked down into his weary eyes. In the great relief which had come to her at sight of her husband's face; in the joy of having him back, which seemed to give him to her as if for the first time, the thought of this maimed and broken life, so poor in joy of any sort, went through her with an afflicting pain. Her own share in his fate enlarged itself, and seemed to press upon her stiflingly; myriads of memories went electrically through her brain. So poor—so poor he was! And she so rich! She stooped with an irresistible impulse, and pressed a fleet kiss on his forehead through her blinding tears.

She seized Deed's arm passionately when they were outside, and walked swiftly with him toward the main street,

with her muff to her face. For a long time neither of them spoke. Then he began in a low voice and told her his news.

When the servant brought Deed's name to her next morning Dorothy experienced a sinking of the heart; but she renewed her resolution with a stern word to herself and went down to him. As she took his hand a little shock went through her that was not all pain. "His father! His father!" she caught herself murmuring. To him she said in a scarcely audible voice, "I am very glad to see you." Her manner was at once eager and reluctant.

She suddenly looked up, encountered his kindly eye, and coloured. His eye was at the moment tenderly studious of her. He saw what Philip perceived in her outward aspect, at least, to like. As she stood before him, a little shyly, taking his hand in her cordial pressure, and lowering her eyes after the first full, frank, pleading meeting with his, she seemed to him very charming.

"You know why I have come?" he said, bending over her.

"About——?"

"Yes. I want you to save him."

She motioned her visitor to the couch, taking a chair herself. "Save him?" she repeated. She clasped her hands in her lap and drew herself slightly together in unconscious resistance. She had instinctively pushed her chair back a little as she sat down; she found the mere potency of his presence, his individuality, vaguely controlling.

"I want you to let him make it right with you, I want you to let me bring you together again; and I want you to do this not for his sake, but for mine. When I tell you, you will understand; and you won't think, I hope, that I ask as much as I must seem to. Last night, Miss Maurice, I came back from Leadville happier than men often are. I had heard great news of him—news that changed all I had been base and cruel enough to think of him. I wanted to hug him. Instead I found him gone, and *this* for news of him—first what he had done, and then that you had broken with him. You were right. You could do no less. I understand all your feeling. But, Miss Maurice, you must take him back. It was I who took Jasper's mine."

"You!" she cried. She smiled nervously.

"Yes, I. Not by the outward rules of things. That was

Philip's part—to seem to do it. But the real doer of an act is the one behind it all who is responsible for it. I was responsible for this. You know what I did against Jasper. This is one of the fruits of it. If I had not done that this could not have happened. I made the situation. He had to act in it as he did. The blame's mine. Lift it from him! It's that I want to ask you."

She was bewildered; she did not know what to say. She stole a glance at him where he sat, and perceived the look like Philip's look; it was about the mouth, perhaps; it was his smile that was like Philip's. He was more handsome than his son; as she whipped another furtive glance at him, she found herself trusting him; his sturdy frame, the clear-cut, powerful face, the alert and genial eye, had all an effect of gentle force, on which she instinctively reposed. To her it seemed that he looked very *right*. He went on in a moment to tell her what he had learned at Leadville—beginning with his quarrel with Philip, and taking pleasure in condemning himself. He said that he had made an egregious and wicked mistake. And then he made her see (he told the story with glistening eyes) how this precious boy of his, whom he had dared to cast off for a fancied

baseness, and against whom he had hardened his heart, had all the time been sheltering and righting and saving him behind his back, by the most shameless trick. . . . He broke down in the midst of it. Tears of pride filled his eyes.

"That was good, that was noble of him!" said Dorothy quickly.

"And you will forgive him? You will pardon him? You will take him back?"

"Oh, don't you think I want to? Don't you suppose I long to? I can't!"

She did not know how she said these things. It seemed easy to talk to him; but difficult—impossible not to do what he wished. The effect of his presence grew upon her rather than diminished; and a kind of diffidence lingered in all she said. She felt keenly how much he had put aside to come to her; that gave authority to all he said—that, and the sense that he was older than she, that he was his father, that he was in trouble; and she felt her own young girl's feelings, opinions, judgments, shrinking in the balance by the operation of an instinct almost like one of decorum.

But she called upon her resolution. In the time which

had passed since Margaret had left her she had gone over the question between herself and Philip with all the honesty she could find in herself. She had forced herself to face it with absolute pitilessness for her own pride, and for all that might be merely extraneous or selfish in her feeling. She had rehearsed it all, as well, with the tenderness for him which, alas, she did not need to force; and she believed that she had taken her resolve. It was taken in bitterness and tears; but it was fixed.

Deed leaned over from his place on the couch, and took her hand. "You won't punish him for what began with me," he said.

"I see what you mean," she said, in a dry voice, out of which she kept her feeling as she could, "but I fear that can't be true for me. I can perceive it; but I can't feel it. I have thought a great deal of what you speak of, though, since he—since Philip told me of it; I have thought of what the punishment you found for your son must have cost you, I mean, and of his ingratitude; and I've been very sorry for you. May I say that?"

"I am very glad to have you say it. I see that you're good, that you're kind."

"No, don't think that, please," murmured Dorothy, painfully. "I am hard; I must be hard."

He regarded her for a moment as he withdrew his hand. "Then we shall understand each other, Miss Maurice," he said. "I am hard. It is that which has brought me here. If I had n't been hard, I should never have got myself and Philip into this miserable mess with Jasper, which has led Philip to do, now, what you see."

"But what you did, and what he has done—they are very different. What you did—do you mind my saying that—may not have been right, perhaps, but it was splendid."

His face confessed his pleasure in her praise, but he said quickly, "Are you quite sure, Miss Maurice, that if you knew all Philip's motives, you would n't find something heroic about them, too? What I did used to seem to me fine, too; it does n't now. But it makes no difference; I had to do it, and every one near to me has had to pay for it. It's taken its revenge," he said sadly. "I was right, perhaps, but I was not right to take my right. An injury began with that which has gone on ever since. There was no injury until I did it to Jasper, for his was what I made it. If I had not resisted it—I see that, now—it must

have stopped there. I was not wise enough. I answered his villainy, and the penalty has been brought home to me since in every form through which I could be made to feel. It has not always been myself; it has been Margaret's fate to suffer for it, too, and now it's Philip's. Don't force him to suffer more for it than you must. That's what I've come to beg of you."

The dignity and reality of his trouble affected her deeply, as she listened. Her generous instinct to rush to the aid of any one in pain or difficulty came over her. But what seemed a final obstacle rose to withhold her. She did not know how to explain it. She lowered her eyes to her lap. "Mrs. Deed came to see me; she has been more than good. She will have told you how I—what I feel," she said huskily.

"I know. It's not only the wrong he has done Jasper—culpable, strange, and mistaken as that is. There is more to forgive."

"Oh, if it were only to forgive——! That would be easy; I suppose I have forgiven now. When one gets over the first pain and shock, one forgives if one loves, instinctively. But that is nothing—a form of words. He would not care

for that; and I could n't offer it to him. What he wishes is something else. The only thing I could do that would do any good would be to bring it all back,—our old relation—as if this had never been. I can wish it back, and I do. But I can't bring it back. Nothing, it seems to me, can do that! Nothing!"

"You mean that you can't bring it back for his own sake or for yours? I know that. Won't you try it, then, for the sake of some one outside of it all—some one who has no claim?"

"You mean——?" she began.

"Yes," he answered eagerly. "Will you do it for me?" A flush mounted to her face. "I have told you how I wronged and misunderstood him," he went on. "You know how he has rewarded me. You see—I'm sure it's natural to you to see such things—how I must long to do something for him: how I can't bear to think, however much he has deserved it, that he should be unhappy."

Dorothy looked over at him compassionately. "I see that!" she breathed.

He leaned forward and took her hand again. "He will pardon me; he will run to do it. But I can't take his pardon

on those terms. You understand. He has humiliated me: he has heaped burning coals of fire on my head. I can't face him in his trouble empty-handed."

"No," she murmured. She was much shaken.

"Listen, my dear girl," he went on. "Do you think that what he has done is less a pain and trouble to me than to you? Have you thought how he is repeating my experience? In attacking Jasper, after all his forbearance, he is beginning as I began, and must go on as I have gone on. You see that. It does n't make what he has done seem less wrong (though it must have excuses of which we know nothing) but, to me, it makes it more pitiful. You understand how I can't look on, and see that happening, and do nothing to stop it. I *must* stop it. Oh, Miss Maurice, I'm sure you can't have the heart to let him stumble on into the mire where I've been struggling these last months—you won't let him do that for lack of a word. I'm sure you will help me!"

He stopped, and a great pity for the man into whose eyes she was looking, for Philip, and for the situation Philip had made common to both of them, came over her. It was almost impossible to her not to try to help them. "Oh, if

it were a question of pity, of tenderness, of love, of anything but what it is!" she burst out.

"But finally that *is* the question—how much you love him, is n't it? And is anything impossible to love?" He leaned forward suddenly. "My dear girl, will you let me tell you of something which has come very close to me?" She was gazing at him in absorption; she nodded tremulously. "You will understand, if I tell you this, that it is necessary—*necessary* to me that you should take him back; you will see that I could n't speak of it for a light reason. You have heard how I abandoned Margaret on her wedding day?"

"Oh, don't speak of that! Don't make me feel that I have forced you to speak of that," she exclaimed in a kind of panic. She was not sure of what she was saying.

He silenced her with a sad and gentle gesture, and sketched the occasion of his difference with Margaret quickly. "You see," he said, at the end, "I had no excuse. It was simply a monstrous humouring of my passion. I forced her to pretend, if she would unselfishly save me from myself, and then savagely punished her for it. I left her as if I had never had an obligation to her. It was an insult, and not a brave one. To desert a woman on her wedding day could never be a handsome thing to do; in this

case, where her only crime was caring for me too well, it was an abominable cruelty. And how did she reward me? Ah, my dear girl, you know! I could never come back to her; she knew it. She knew that I had shut the gates of Paradise behind me, and that, except for the chance of her mercy, I must remain at the decent distance I had chosen for myself, cursing my folly, and longing vainly for her. It was her right never to suffer me to so much as see her again—a thousand times her right. I had outraged her pride; I had wounded her at a woman's tenderest and dearest. And she forgave me! Don't ask me how. She found a way." He got up, abruptly, and looked down for a moment in silence at the stooping figure in the chair before him. Dorothy's head was in her hands. She was weeping bitterly. "My dear girl," he asked with grave tenderness, "won't you find a way?"

She rose, and put her hands in his.

"I will try," she said, lifting her tear-stained face to his, bravely.

"And I may tell him—?"

"Tell him I will see him."

He looked at her long and questioningly, while he held her hands.

CHAPTER X

"But you didn't tell him that there was any difficulty between Miss Maurice and Philip, I hope. You weren't such a dunce as that, Ned?"

It was two days later, and they were seated at dinner. Margaret had secured rooms at the Centropolis House against Deed's return from Piñon (with Philip she hoped), and had taken up her own residence there, though she was much at the Vertners. She had said that she felt that they—she and Deed—must begin to think of settling down, like sensible people (she had begun to make plans from the hour in which she heard Deed's good news about the Leadville business); and though she did not pretend that apartments at a hotel were even by way of gratifying this ambition, she said that they at least did not constitute a step in the other direction, like staying with one's friends.

Vertner arrested the carving knife with which he had been inquiring his way to the joint of the fowl before him, and levelled a glance of scorn at his wife in response to her question.

"Well, I should hope not," she rejoined to this disclaimer, as he busied himself about the fowl again. And then after a pause, "I shall always say it was very good of you to go out to the Triangle to see what you could do for him, Ned."

"Shall you? Well, I should think more of it myself if Jasper interested me less. I did n't go to nurse him; I went to take a look at him. He has a special effect on me; I'm curious about him; I'm always wondering what he will do next."

"Well, you see what he has done next."

"Yes, but just before he did it, I thought he was going to do something else." Vertner asked Edward to hand him the cranberries, as he finished cutting some of the fowl for himself, and settled himself at the table, with the conscious pleasure of the carver who has earned his contentment. "I had got his next move all planned out in my mind; I thought I saw that he had seen a point which dawned on me while I was sitting with him; perhaps he has seen it—indeed I'm

pretty sure he has—but he has n't acted on it. He has done something even more brilliant."

"Do you call it brilliant to go after Mr. Maurice and Dorothy by the next train?"

"From his point of view—certainly. Do you suppose Jasper could sit still under the thought that, after all that has happened, it should be his brother who succeeds with her. He will know how to reconcile himself to it if it happens: but he is n't going to let it happen if he can help himself. The first news that reached him when he was brought back to Maverick was that they were engaged; and if I know Jasper he wanted to break something in celebration of that news. But then along comes Philip and puts a weapon into his hands, and he rages, but chirks up. He sees the opportunity his brother has given him. And then he hears that the engagement is broken on account of the same affair, and that pleases him down to the ground."

"But how did he hear that? And how do you suppose he knew that Mr. Maurice and Dorothy were going yesterday afternoon, when no one else knew it?"

"Well, I think I could imagine. Who has always been his friend here?"

"Why, Mr. Maurice, but—"

"There is no 'but.' Maurice was angry when she broke the engagement, of course; he supposed Philip was the rich one then. But the transfer of the 'Little Cipher' to Jasper changed his mind, just as she was beginning to change her mind back again. I don't believe he was very sorry that, if the *Sentinel* had to copy that article from the Laughing Valley paper about his doings over there, it should choose this time for it. Perhaps she gave him more definite reason to believe that she would forgive Philip than she gave Deed. At all events, he would n't care to keep her where Philip would certainly find her within a day or two and make it up with her. He decided to take an early train, for various reasons; but first he let Jasper know where he was going."

"I wish we knew. I begged her to telegraph. I knew Margaret would never forgive me if I did n't. But I wanted to know for myself. I am very sorry for her."

"So am I. But I am still more sorry for Deed and Philip. Think of Deed bringing him back here to find her gone! He's set his heart on this thing. He is in such a position that his peace of mind depends on his success in it.

I sha'n't forget for a while the after-dinner cigar I smoked with Deed the day before he called on Dorothy. I've seen men crushed before; but not like that. Well, of course it tore him up to have to feel that Phil had turned round and been his salvation after all! After quarrelling with him, and casting him off because he thought he was unfaithful to him, it *was* pretty rough. He could have stood it to know that he had been in the wrong, and that he had accused Philip without any too much excuse; but this was another matter. It's awful for a generous man to have to see that he has done a nasty thing. From the hour when he faced the fact that his son had really been fixing things up for him at Leadville—doing his best to stop the boomerang Deed had started on its cheerful career before he left Leadville; using the $50,000 he had flung at him to save him, and generally toeing the mark, and doing his duty like a little man—from that hour he has been the happiest and the most miserable man going. To know that Phil was all right tickled him to death, but it shocked him to think how he had used him. His going to Dorothy yesterday did n't surprise me. He did n't say he was going; but it was the only thing left to him. When Margaret told him about it, I guess he felt that

this little rumpus between Miss Maurice and Phil was a kind of providence. It gave him a show. He could n't take Philip's hand again, until he had made it right with him, somehow. That was his chance. He took it and won —or at least, if Maurice had let things alone, he stood a first-rate chance to win. And now he will be bringing Phil back with him to-morrow morning, both of them all ready to be mighty happy, and I don't know which the gladdest to be friends with the other again, and they will find her gone. It makes me tired!" exclaimed Vertner, pressing his handkerchief nervously to his brow, and ejaculating the slang as if it had the force of a phrase sacred to grief.

"I'm not sure whether Philip deserves much pity," said Beatrice after a moment. "Of course I'm sorry for him; but, as Margaret would say, I'm not sure that I ought to be. She could n't do anything but give him up after he had done such a thing."

"Perhaps *she* could n't. I'm not sure that another woman (a little different, or a little older woman: say a woman of thirty, instead of a girl of twenty-one) might not have found that she could do something else in her situation, though—dodge around a bit, and find her feelings

coming up in unexpected places to square things with her conscience or her other feelings."

"It's easy for men to say such things; and perhaps you are right—about some women," responded his wife, after a moment. "But you can't judge, Ned. You can't feel as a woman must in such a case. The circumstances were peculiar."

"Peculiar mainly in his not being so all-firedly guilty as her treatment of him makes out. Of course it is n't proper to take your brother's mine; but that is n't the question. The actual question is surrounded by a thousand reasons for thinking that it *is* just right to take your brother's mine, and that it might be a hallowed duty. Besides, he did n't do that—he merely failed to let on that he had once thought the 'Little Cipher' would be a good mine to give to his brother."

"Pshaw, Ned! You exaggerate!"

"Well, I'm stating the case for the defence. You don't expect me to stick to absolutely undecorated facts, do you? Still, I stand by that. That's the gist of it. You get into a hair-splitting region when you try to say whose mine that actually was. My mind is too gross for it. And, at all

events, you must admit that she has been pretty hard on him; she's too clear-headed. Women *are* that way when it comes to the wrong doings of the man nearest to them; and especially if it touches them, directly. I see it in you sometimes, Trix; but Dorothy is much worse."

"Oh, she sees things," owned Beatrice.

"Sees things! Well, I should remark—outside and inside, and underneath and all around. That's what makes me pity Phil. No man can stand that kind of soul-plumbing, straight in the eye, unforgiving, undiscounting, heavenly stare. We're not built that way—and Phil, poor fellow, less than most of us. Phil makes allowances for himself; he knows where he needs them, and he puts them where they will do the most good. It has got him into the habit of thinking that other people will be making the same for him; and some of us crude sinners, who know how it is ourselves, make them right along, and glad of the chance, with one of the best fellows in the world. But, bless my soul, is that the way she takes him! Is that the way any woman takes a man? Not much! She takes him on the ground of the fellow she's dreamed, and he has to live up not only to the man she thinks him, but to the

kind of man she thinks all good men. It's the sort of thing to do a man good. I don't deny it. It puts stuff into him; it's a tonic and a stimulant and a bracer. But it's hard, constant, ticklish work. And the worst of it is, it don't count,—not for what it is. Women, dear things, fancy it as the every-day attitude of the sex; and when, some fine morning, you relax a bit, you're punished not on the basis of what you are, but on the basis of what she's all along been thinking you."

"Oh, you don't get any more than you deserve," laughed Beatrice.

"It's all right. I don't say it isn't. I only say that we're entitled to warning; it's like playing poker, without notice that you are playing 'straights.' I like to be familiar with the rules, myself, before I risk my money."

"The rules are perfectly simple. You've only got to be good."

"You call that simple! I fancy Phil would n't agree with you. Shut up, son," he said, in an aside to the young man who was strumming on his plate with his spoon.

CHAPTER XI

In the late afternoon of the following day Dorothy was sitting on the piazza of one of the smaller hotels at Colorado Springs watching the sun go down behind Pike's Peak. The little city of invalids and tourists, which has easily one of the loveliest situations in the world, was at one of its best moments. The sun had not gone; the clear air seemed more clear for the tinge of rosiness, and the splendid bulk of the Peak, cut crisply against the dying light, looked down on a cluster of villas and hotels, in which each structure seemed to stencil its Queen Anne jaggedness, or Late Colorado vagaries of outline against a sky which invited stencilling.

She was alone on the piazza. Some of the other people staying at the hotel (there were not many) had made up a party and driven over to the Garden of the Gods and

Manitou; two or three young men had gone on a walk to Cheyenne Cañon; some ladies, left behind, were in their rooms. It was just before the supper hour, and the excursionists would soon be returning. Her father had left her half an hour before, saying that he wanted a walk; he had not suggested that she should come with him, and she had made no movement to accompany him. She was glad to be quiet and think.

She sat thus, for a long time, meditating about many things, and working at some embroidery in her hands intermittently, until suddenly she felt rather than saw a shadow fall between her and the sun, and, looking up, she perceived Jasper. She rose instantly. A shock went through her. She felt herself gazing at him defiantly; and then she saw how very ill he looked. His face was almost spectral; its old firmness was gone. His hollow cheeks and cavernous eyes gave her a start. Her glance roved hastily over him; she saw that his clothes, which had been used to set so trimly on his figure, hung on him with an almost shambling looseness. In her surprise she remained motionless, arrested half-way in her intention to go in and leave him standing there. He perceived his advantage and

said, in the thin and wasted voice which had replaced his former manly tones,

"You are wondering at the change. Did n't you know that I had been ill?"

She made "Yes" with her lips.

"But you did n't think it was so bad? It was a close call."

"You ought not to be out. You ought not to be up," she said. She forgot that she had not meant to speak to him. A ball of worsted with which she had been working fell from her arms, and rolled out on the piazza. He stooped with his old precise courtesy, and restored it to her.

"I had a very good reason for getting up," he said. "I heard that you had gone away—that you were leaving Maverick for good. I had meant to wait until I could come to see you in the usual way; I should have managed it in a day or two. But your going made everything different."

"Excuse me," rejoined Dorothy hastily. "I can't allow you to include me in your plans."

He smiled tolerantly. "You remember our last meeting,

do you not? You remember your promise. I have been waiting for your answer."

In all the reflections which had contemned Jasper and put him for ever out of the case for her, she had not thought of this; that, in form, he was entitled to some word from her. She saw that it put her for the moment in the wrong with him. But she said with disdain,

"I did n't think it necessary to tell you that I had found you out. I supposed you would guess that."

Jasper bit his lip, and waited a moment before replying. He had determined, in seeking this interview, to keep his temper.

"I knew that you had resolved to break faith with me when I heard of your engagement to my brother. I don't see why I was bound to suppose that your reason was one discreditable to me."

"Break faith with you?" she repeated scornfully.

"You won't say that you had n't as good as promised me; you won't pretend that if you had never said a word, you had not still given me the right to believe that I was something more to you than another. You distinguished me, you encouraged me; it might not have meant great things

in another case. But you have n't forgotten that we were once betrothed; a woman does n't single out for favour a man who has once occupied that relation to her unless she means something in particular."

The truth of this came over Dorothy helplessly. She gathered herself to confute it, but before she spoke she knew that he had, in a sense, the right of it. It was not in her to lessen a fault because it was hers; rather it pressed on her the more closely. But she saw that if she let Jasper make this point, it must be the end of everything.

"Does it really seem to you that you have a right to expect the same consideration as other men?" she asked looking into his eyes.

"Why not? You give it to him."

Dorothy caught her breath, as he said this—not bitterly or heatedly, but with the quiet manner of stating a consideration which she had omitted. She saw all that he meant; it quelled and beat her down. She glanced at him where he stood with his back to the sun, supporting himself lightly against a pillar, and fixing her with a glimmering smile. She opened her lips to speak and closed them again, thinking better of what she had been going to

say. But in a moment she raised her head, and said quickly:

"I can't discuss that with you;" and made a motion to pass him.

He put out a gentle hand to stay her. "Please don't go yet, Miss Maurice. I've left a sick bed and come a long way to see you. I'm sure you won't refuse to hear me. You have not been fair." He did not strike this note at hazard; she stopped; he had known she must stop. "If you don't think me worthy of ordinary usage because of my treatment of him, what do you think of his treatment of me?"

The question sent a chill through her: she knew what she had thought of it. Was that still her thought? Confronted with her own sense of Philip's act, balanced in this sort against her sense of Jasper's, she had suddenly the need to take refuge in any denial of her old feeling. She could not bear to think, even for that passing moment, that a feeling of hers was sanctioning his comparison. For a moment no answer befriended her; it was because from one point of view there was no answer, she saw. But the necessity to defend him, to cry out against this odious grouping, brought her the certainty—the sudden, illuminating certainty

—that hers was the other point of view. She saw surely, for the first time, that the mood of her talk with Deed was a finality ; that love had conquered in her. It was her love that spoke now.

"And have you the courage to think the two cases in any way alike?" she said.

He had counted on her inward assent to the soundness of his position. He had it ; but he was dealing with another force which he could not measure. He was shaken by the assurance with which she answered. Was he mistaken, then : had she not thrown Philip over because she hated the injury he had done him? He had reckoned on this and on the revulsion of feeling toward the injured one which he had imagined in her generous nature. Taking his own act for a moment from what he supposed to be her standpoint, and putting it at its worst (he knew what to think of it himself, but he could fancy her ignorant objections to it readily enough), in what way could she in justice feel it to be more heinous than Philip's? Jasper was, of course, better at almost anything than in estimating the moral value of his own actions ; his sincerity in believing them "all right" from the standpoint of a man who did n't

pretend to the priggishness of being better than his neighbours disabled his usual cleverness at this point. But he saw his mistake and manœuvred an inward retreat and brought himself into line at another place, before he answered.

"Suppose I say I have that courage?" He stroked his moustache lightly. Its rich, bright abundance made the cheek behind it seem more pale.

She met his eye fearlessly. "I should ask you if you had given your brother back the share in the ranch you took from him if I believed you.

"Why should I?"

"Why should you?"

"Yes. It is mine for one thing, but that apart, he has n't done as much for me."

"But he has restored the mine to you—he has surrendered everything."

"The mine—yes; but not everything. There is a matter of $5,000."

"What do you mean?" She swept a thousand possibilities with her mental vision while she waited for his answer, and rejected them one after another.

"My precious brother negotiated the loan of that sum on

the security of the mine, I find. That was one of the first things he did with his borrowed claim."

"It is not true," said Dorothy simply.

"You might ask your father!"

"My father?" exclaimed she.

"Philip borrowed it for him. It was at a time when your father found it inconvenient to owe me as much as that." He smiled with intention.

"Do you mean to say that—that——?" she gasped.

"That I had the presumption to lend your father as much money as that? Yes. I suppose I must n't expect you to like it, but I did it."

"And he—he, took it from *him* to pay you?"

Jasper nodded. She gave a little moan, and sank into one of the seats on the piazza.

The young men who had gone for a walk to Cheyenne Cañon were visible on the road before the hotel. Their woollen stockings and knee breeches were covered with dust; they came along at a swinging pace, laughing and talking. They passed into the house through the wide entrance, casting a glance of polite curiosity at the intent group at the further end of the piazza.

"Will you do me a kindness?" she asked in a husky voice, as he dropped into the seat beside her. He protested his eagerness. "Go away, please!" she entreated.

"I beg your pardon," exclaimed Jasper, as if he had not understood.

"Please go away. You have made me hear it. I could n't help that. But you won't stay, now!" She paused, and clasped her hands before her. A wretched sigh escaped her. "Oh, how could he?" she cried to herself, in the words she had once used for Philip.

"You are not fair, Miss Maurice," he said, rising with dignity. "Am I to blame because my brother has chosen to borrow money on my mine and has failed to return it to me; am I to blame because your father chooses, for reasons of his own, to make such an arrangement with your affianced husband?"

"Oh, don't! Don't! Have you no manliness?" She felt her cheeks burning with the horror of the ideas that were coming to her; she turned away to hide their shameful confession. She was trying not to hate her father; she was searching for excuses for him. Was it to this, then, that Mr. Deed's allusion to Philip's motives pointed? Was it

her father that she must blame for what Philip had done?

"Is the truth so hard, then?" Jasper was asking. "Would you rather believe what you wish to believe; would you rather think well of certain persons, even if you knew it was not the truth? But I need n't ask. You take the side toward which you are drawn for the moment—like a woman, and everything is indifferent to you but the illusions by which you make yourself think that the right side at all hazards. The truth does n't matter to you—nor justice, nor fairness. You need n't tell me that; I know it," he said.

She winced; the stroke was well aimed. "You know much better than that," she answered feebly.

"Say rather that I used to know better. But I knew it of another woman, I think. The woman I used to know, Miss Maurice, could n't be so resolved to think badly of a man who has openly taken his right, and so determined, at all costs, to think well of a man who trades on his brother's ignorance to cheat him out of his property." She shrank where she sat, and he pressed home his advantage. "Is it the motive that makes the difference? Is it so wrong, then, to take what belongs to one, without malice, or double

thoughts, or hope of any gain but the plain one; and is it so right to take what does *not* belong to one with the admirable motive of revenge, and the other admirable motive of winning a sneaking advantage with a woman? Ah," cried he bitterly, "it makes a difference who does such things, and even more it makes a difference for whom they are done!"

"Oh no, no!" she began vehemently. But she sank back in her chair helplessly. She shook her head. "You would not understand," she said.

His voice took a note of tenderness, as he dropped again into the seat beside her, and said in low tones, "Are you sure of that, Miss Maurice? I think I know what you have been thinking of me these last few weeks, since we met. You have heard things about me which could n't make you think well of me. But I want you to do me the justice to remember that they were not told you by my friends. There are always two sides. It would be fair to hear mine, before judging. But I don't ask you to do that. Suppose I admit all that you are thinking, suppose I say that I see it, in a degree, from your own point of view, suppose I agree to make it right with my father, to restore what he thinks I

came by unfairly ; suppose, in other words, I agree to take your view—would you care, would it make a difference to you?"

She glanced up at him in bewilderment. "I'm not sure that I know what you mean," she said quickly. "I could n't care that you should agree with me, merely to agree. You must know that. But the other——" She paused a moment. "You must be equally sure that I should be glad of anything that made you think it right to do that," she said gravely. It was difficult to think of anything but the near and personal trouble which was gnawing at her heart ; but his suggestion opened vistas ; it stimulated and engaged her.

"Would you care so much then?" he asked, regarding her curiously.

She hesitated a moment. "Yes, very much," she said heartily. "I have seen your father. Knowing him has given me a great wish to help him. If you could see how what you did has wounded and broken him you would wish to do what you say even more than I could wish to have you do it."

"He has n't treated me well," said Jasper laconically.

"No," rejoined Dorothy, eagerly. "It was only what you might have expected him to do: it was only what he had a right to do by the code most of us live by, but he, too, feels that it was a mistake. Or perhaps I ought to say that he feels it was n't as right as it seemed to him at the time."

"Well, that's a step," admitted Jasper. And he added, "He did me a beastly injury."

"And what had you done to him?"

"I had taken my rights."

"Yes," said Dorothy, with intention.

"Do you mean that they were not my rights? He had given them to me himself."

"No, I don't mean that," said she quietly. Her assent maddened him more than any denial could have done. It gave him a feeling of helplessness absolutely singular in his experience.

"Oh, I know what you mean," he retorted bitterly. "You mean that you despise me!" Philip's words came back to her, and she wondered how she had ever borne to hear them from him, and allowed him to go from her feeling that what he said was true.

"No," she said gently.

"It's the same thing. I don't thank you for the difference. But you *shall* think differently of me!" He rose quickly and stood before her. "Listen. I have passed three days face to face with death since we met last. Perhaps I am not the same man you have known in all respects." His husky, inadequate voice gave the statement meaning; almost gave it reality. "Would you believe me changed if I were to say so?" He looked closely at her.

"I don't know," she said, looking up at him doubtfully. A new light came into her eyes. "Such things do change a man."

"You imply a doubt whether they would change me. But you shall believe it," he said fiercely. "I will go on to Maverick to-day and withdraw from the suit against my father which is to come on to-morrow, I will give up to my brother the share in the ranch which my father claims for him."

"You will!" exclaimed she. "Oh, I shall be glad for your father." Her eyes left him musingly, in a happy look.

"And for me?"

She glanced inquiringly at him. She brought herself back to the consideration of his relation to his proposal

with an effort. "Oh, I shall be very glad for you, too, of course."

His face fell. "Is that what you mean?" he asked. "Is that all you mean?"

"I shall feel it is good of you—from your point of view; yes, very good."

He bit his lip. It was hardly this measured approbation that he had sought. She saw the defeated look on his face, and with a movement of compassion and self-accusal, she rose, holding out her hand to him. "I shall think better of you, if that is what you mean. It is generous; it is right."

He held her hand firmly, searching her eyes with a piercing gaze. "How much better?" he asked.

She withdrew her hand. "What do you mean?" she asked, in confusion.

"I am ready to do all that there is to do to show my sincerity."

"Yes," assented she bewildered; "that is true."

"Will you do nothing for me?"

"What do you wish?"

"Believe in me again." He stooped over her.

"I will. I do." She withdrew herself from him a little, vaguely alarmed by his manner.

"You know very well what I wish, Dorothy. Believe in me as you used to."

"I can't do that," she said, looking into his eyes unfalteringly. Her breath came quickly.

"Would it be such a miracle, then?"

She nodded.

"Ah," cried he, "you can work it for *him!*"

"It is not the same," she stammered.

"No," he rejoined, "it is not the same. It should be much more difficult. He won you from me through this mine."

"Oh, don't say it," begged Dorothy.

"—— and he has not scorned to take a more material profit from that villainy. What is he giving up? You made that the test a little while ago. By that measure do I show so badly?"

"He will pay you the money," she said desperately.

"Perhaps. I don't know. It would n't be unlike him, you must own, if he did n't. But can he give me back what else he has taken from me?"

"What?" she asked in a half whisper, though she knew what he must say.

"*You!* Can he pay that debt? Can he give you back to me?" Dorothy dropped her eyes. He took her hand and bent over her tenderly. She seemed suddenly stricken powerless; she could prevent nothing. "It is only you who can pay that debt for him," he said.

His weakened voice had a winning note in its ineffectiveness. For the space of an instant, while she stood there arraigning Philip, as he meant her to, and liking his own surrender as he had hoped, something in her—an effect of nerves rather than of impulses, even the most trivial,—responded to him. The plea was ingenious; it addressed itself with overwhelming force to a whole side of her nature; for a moment she felt as if she was about to be carried off her feet—toward what she knew not. Not away from Philip, certainly; but at least toward the man by her side. She felt the dangerous stirrings of pity at her heart. But a moment later she glanced up and saw him watching her, and another thought came into her mind.

Then she spoke. "It does not seem to me a debt; but

if it were, you must know that I could not pay it," she said, steadily.

A look of bitter disappointment crossed his countenance.

"Do you mean that?" he asked, scanning her face.

"Yes."

"Yet you expect me to pay my debt," he said bitingly, "—what you regard as mine. You expect me to restore to my father and to him!" It was a question, though he put it forth as a statement.

"I expect nothing. You wish that for yourself, do you not?"

Jasper smiled sardonically. "Do you suppose that I can wish for anything apart from my wish for you. You don't know how I love you—you have never known. Say that we may be again as we once were, and you will see what I would be strong enough for. You could do what you would with me."

Her eyes blazed with sudden intelligence. "Do you mean to say—do you dare to say," she asked shakenly, "that you would only do what you have been proposing to do, if—that you would not do it unless—— Oh! Oh! And you offered it as a *bribe!* Oh, go, go!"

He caught her hands, and prisoning them in his, looked down steadfastly into her eyes, with a long, intent, hungry look. An expression of acute misery came over his face. "Ah," he cried desperately, "now you *do* despise me!"

She lowered her eyes. She did not answer. He dashed his hand to his face, and without a word walked quickly away from her side, and out into the roadway before the hotel, with the uncertain steps of a sick man.

Dorothy stood where he had left her. She heard his retreating steps, but did not look round. Her eyes were fixed on the rosy summit of the peak. As she looked the sun suddenly went down. A chill was borne to her through the air, and she started. She perceived that she must have been standing so a long time. She put her hand to her face. There were tears in her eyes, too. She saw her father coming toward the hotel from the direction opposite to that which Jasper had taken. A chill went through her for another reason.

CHAPTER XII

Margaret stood in the window of her sitting-room at the Centropolis House, which commanded a view of the arrival platform of the railway, and exchanged signals with Deed as he alighted from his train, on his return from Piñon. She saw Philip follow him, with their hand luggage, and as he set it down on the platform, he too glanced up at her window, and catching her eye, waved his hat toward her, with a smile of greeting. Then Vertner seized upon them, and she saw him going through the hopeless struggle to tell them only so much of the truth as he thought they would like; with a beating heart she saw her husband pressing, insisting, and finally pinning him, and Vertner going through the stages of impotent yielding, burlesquing his helplessness with desperate gestures. She saw her husband cowed and dazed, as she had feared, by his news, and saw Philip fall upon Vertner

with questions; then it was Vertner who took the initiative, and he forcibly pulled into the conference the conductor of the train, who was passing them, left them for a moment to dash into the hotel, bestirred himself, bustled about, and finally pushed Philip on the train again, handed his valise up to him, and waved a gay and cheering hand to him, as the train pulled out of the station. Deed, when he had seen the last of the train, turned and challenged Vertner again, and they talked soberly for some moments.

They were palpitating moments to Margaret. Since Dorothy had so suddenly left Maverick with her father, she had been in a distracted state. It seemed as if she was almost to blame for it, as if she could have prevented it if she had not gone at Mrs. Felton's invitation for a long drive, on that day, to Loredano; and returned only to find them both gone, leaving no trace save a confused and hurried note from Dorothy, which told her nothing. She quailed before the thought of what this failure of his hope must be to her husband.

She heard his quick step in the passage and ran to admit him. When she had kissed him she searched his face, and withdrew herself from his embrace in alarm, recognizing the

set look of resolve she remembered from the fatal day on which he had left her to go and right himself with Jasper.

He went to the window, while she watched him anxiously, and cast a glance up and down the track. Then he dropped restlessly into a seat, and fixed his eyes dejectedly on the carpet. She took a seat opposite him ; when he glanced up she was shocked by his haggard and desperate face. Again she saw in it that look of a man whose fight is done.

"I've got to stop this," he said briefly.

"What, James?"

"The whole of it. Have things been going so well with us for the last six months that I need say? You know what's happened?"

She nodded, with her eyes intent upon him.

"She's gone ; Jasper's with her ; I've failed. That's the end of it. I say I've got to stop it."

"Oh I shall be glad—glad!" she whispered, trying to trust him because she had learned that lesson, but inwardly filled with anguishing doubt.

"I've been a fool. Since Jasper paid us his visit at Mineral Springs I've known that ; you showed it to me ; and

instead of owning up on the spot, and doing what was left to redeem you and me from the consequences of my folly, I've been blundering on since, trying to deny it to myself, and trying hard to believe that I could invent some new way to whip the devil around the stump, and avoid what I—what I didn't want to do," he ended huskily. "It would have worked if it had only been a question of myself, or you: I dare say I could have found obstinacy and pride and reckless selfishness enough for that." He sighed. "But Philip makes all the difference!"

"Yes," said Margaret, still in a whisper.

"Even with him, I thought I could help him to dodge the penalty; I thought I could hoax, or blind or buy off fate in his case. But Jasper has got in his blow in return already; the infernal business of give and take has begun. The boy has got to repeat my experience, unless—unless——! He's paid; he's restored; it makes no difference. There is a sore underneath. We must cure that first. My fault is so hopelessly mixed up with his that nothing he can do can really help him. It's I who have to do!"

"But what, James?" cried Margaret in an alarm she could no longer hide. "But what?"

He returned her frightened look with a tender one. "Jasper's suit against me comes on to-morrow."

"Yes," she assented breathlessly.

"If it is decided in my favour the fight merely shifts; it doesn't end. If it's decided against me, am I likely to bear it well? Do you think I could resist striking back? That is the way it has been with me; that is the way it *will* be with me. It's endless. Ah, Margaret, we know that—don't we? Resistance can't stop it; it piles it up. And if that is true for us, how much more it will be true for Philip! The fight must be between brothers, there, with none of the habit of forbearance on either side that makes certain things impossible between father and son! I can't see him marching helplessly into that miserable maze, and involving an innocent girl as I involved you, and him. I can't. I've got to stop it."

"But how? Fighting only makes it worse. You say so yourself," she said tentatively.

He stared into her eyes a moment.

"I'm not going to fight," he said. He drew a long breath as he rose. She got up and came to him and slipping her arm in his, looked up into his face. He glanced down at

her; his eyes gleamed with the exaltation of his resolve. "I'm going to surrender."

A joyous light dawned in her eyes.

"Do you mean that you will give him back the ranch,—that you will restore everything as it was before, before—?"

"Before I took what belonged to me? Yes, Margaret, I'm going to try your remedy, whatever you like to call it. I've used up all my own. Don't think I like it. I loathe it. But I'm going to do it. I shall sell the 'Lady Bountiful' as soon as Spring opens, and buy the range back from Snell at once (it will be easy enough—this bluffing suit of Jasper's frightens him, though his title is perfectly good); and I shall let Jasper know immediately—before the trial."

"Oh, James!" she murmured, clutching his arm, and looking up into his face, lovingly, admiringly, happily.

"Don't praise it, Margaret," he cried, turning hastily from her shining look, as from something to which he had no claim, "or I sha'n't have the heart to do it. And God knows I don't want to do it." He walked away from her to the window, and went on with his back to her. "It's right; you needn't say it; I know it. It's right, and it's the only thing to do, just as it was the only thing to do in the

beginning. I see the folly and error of fighting evil, fast enough, if that's what you want me to see—the way to conquer it is to yield to it, to give it more than it asks." He turned toward her with his hands in his pockets. "The mistaken way is to strike back, and to that mistake there is no end. I've learned that. But it's hard, and if I knew a decent way to dodge it I should n't be a hero about it. Don't imagine it."

For answer to this she simply put her arms about his neck, and drew his lips to hers.

"You are hero enough for me!" she said.

CHAPTER XIII

Dorothy drew back a pace as her father came up to her on the piazza, while Jasper walked away in the other direction. Maurice was smiling, and wiping his brow with one hand; in the other he held his parson's wide-awake.

"It's warm walking," he said. "Who was it who just left you? I thought his back looked like Jasper's."

"It *was* Mr. Deed," she said, trying to find her voice.

"Ah, well, he will be coming back then. But I'm sorry you did not keep him."

"He is not coming back," said Dorothy, in the same still, controlled voice. "I want to ask you something, father," she added with an effort.

He looked at her inquiringly.

"Well, my dear, what is it?" He turned half about

pursuing Jasper's retreating figure absently. "I'm sorry you did not keep him," he said.

"Listen, father." She laid a hand on his arm, and he looked around at her, surprised by her tone. "Did you borrow a large sum from him—from this Mr. Deed?"

He started.

"He has been telling you that?" exclaimed he.

She went on, intent upon her purpose. "Is it true?"

He bit his lip. "Yes, it's true."

"And did you make Philip take his brother's mine to pay that debt for you, when—when——?"

He gazed at her sternly; he seized her wrist. "What is the matter with you, Dorothy? Are you mad? Don't let one of your impulsive ideas get the better of you! They make you absurd; they are very young."

"Is it true?" she repeated in a dry, estranged voice.

"No," returned he doggedly, "of course it is n't true."

"But you took the money from him to pay *him?*"

He released his hold on her wrist, and shuffled his hands into his pockets. He shrugged his shoulders.

She stared at him irresolutely. "Will you answer me, father?" A cold terror crept about her heart. "Did you?"

He forced his vagrant eye to face her. "Excuse me, Dorothy. There are matters which I have always reserved to myself. They are not a part of your province. Please understand that this is one of them."

She put this away with a gesture. "Answer me, please, father," she said coldly. "Did you?"

"Yes, if you must know," he jerked out at last. "But——"

Her face grew very white and rigid. "That is all I want to know," she said. She clutched the work in her hands against her breast, and went quickly past him, and into the hotel.

She rose early the next morning, and taking her breakfast in her room, to avoid meeting her father (it must come, but she did not feel strong enough for it yet), she walked out in the early morning sunshine to the Garden of the Gods. As she went through the splendid gateway, the two towering masses of rock caught up her thought to the level of their lonely summits; they seemed to swim up there in the air, in the isolation of a serene and immemorial past; they made human troubles appear small and fleeting. She walked on, finding a kind of medicine in the sweet, stimulating air, and the bright sunshine.

In the first moments of her humiliation she had thought

that she must seek refuge from her father somewhere ; and Margaret had occurred to her as a resource. Her shame for him and for herself seemed in the beginning a feeling she could never face by his side. Their life together was too close to leave an opening for compromise ; if she was to remain with him she knew that it must be as his daughter, with all that the word had meant for her since her mother's death ; and she did not see how that could be ; it implied a perfect trust and understanding between them which no longer existed. But she had seen immediately that she could not go away from him even for the moment ; her permanent feeling of loyalty, which she had never allowed to falter, would not suffer it ; if she could find it in her heart to leave him upon one impulse, she saw that she must straightway return to him upon another. The protecting, almost motherly instinct which had taught her the thousand cares for his happiness that had so long compassed him about, would not let her forego her place by his side. Her eyes were opened (even if they were not so widely opened as she supposed), and she seemed to be seeing her father through a new and loathly medium which distorted all that she had trusted and loved in him ; but the love and trust

were actually stronger than all newer feelings. She saw this almost at first, and afterward it was borne in upon her; she took strength from the belief to face the prospect of the days lived by his side which seemed now to stretch in a dismal procession far into an unlovely future.

She had thought of going to Margaret at first, as I have said, but that resort presented difficulties even if she had been resolved to go somewhere, or to some one. She could not tell her about her father; and if she could she was not sure that Margaret, with all her fineness of perception in certain directions, would understand.

No, it was not Margaret for whom something in her seemed to cry out. She felt bruised, disheartened, disillusioned; she longed to lean herself on a different kind of strength. She perceived, in a moment, that she was thinking of Philip; and, the moment after, faced the fact with all its consequences, without disquiet. She saw him suddenly as her only refuge; and rejoiced, after a tremulous thought, in seeing him so.

His blundering force—not sharpened to a point, like his brother's, but so sure, large, restful—seemed to her, as her heart went out to him in the exile to which she had con-

demned him, the most excellent thing in the world. She wondered where he was; she had said that she would see him; he would have come back with his father to Maverick. But when he found her gone, which way would he turn? The thought came to her that he would fancy she had fled from Maverick, of her own motion, to avoid the consequences of her rash yielding to his father's entreaty; it was suddenly intolerable to her that he should think that, and she thought she would walk on through the Garden of the Gods to Manitou, and send a telegram to Beatrice at Maverick to say where she was: she had promised her that much, and had not kept her promise because her father, for his own reasons, had asked her not to.

The unquestioning obedience which had gone with her unquestioning trust was broken down by her new vision of her father, and the knowledge that he would not wish a thing was not the final hindrance it had seemed yesterday. She quickened her pace believing for a moment that her strong desire that Philip should not think what she fancied him thinking alone controlled her; but the need for him—the need for his strength, his unconscious manliness, for that open-air quality in him which seemed to annul diffi-

culties and anxieties, for his wholesomeness and genuineness, came over her in an irresistible flood. And when she had recognized this she did not deny its meaning to herself in any way ; she knew that it was he whom she wished ; and not for any reason but one obvious and sufficient one.

She had imagined, altogether afresh, while she lay awake during the night, the persuading causes which had led him to the act that had separated them, and saw her father in them all. In her passionate wish to exculpate Philip she perhaps implicated her father, in fancy, more deeply than she could have alleged any solid warrant for. But indeed, in the strenuous swing to the opposite point of view which had been operated within her with the swiftness and cer tainty of her woman's processes, she now found it as abundantly easy to discover excuses for him as she had before found it abundantly hard. And the knowledge that her father had injured him in injuring her was not the reason it should have been for wishing that she might never have to face him again. On the contrary.

The rattle of a horse's hoofs echoed behind her on the hard road along which she was walking, and she turned and saw Philip coming toward her. He reined in his horse, as

he came near. Her limbs trembled under her, and she experienced an inconsequent impulse to flight; but she walked on until his voice behind her brought her to a halt, and she forced herself to turn and look toward him. He raised his sombrero as he drew in his animal by her side, and with the same motion threw himself off, and stood beside her. He put out his hand silently, and she slipped hers into his waiting clasp, shyly and limply at first, and then, as her little hand was swallowed up in the embrace of his big one, and she felt him bending over her inquiringly, anxiously, tenderly, she surrendered it to him, wholly, giving back his firm grip with her own quick, warm, vigorous clasp. Then she looked up at him, and read the suffering through which she had caused him to pass in the drawn lines of his strong, browned, honest face.

"Your father told me I should find you here," he said.

"Yes," she answered, dropping her eyes.

"You are not angry with me for coming?"

She glanced up at him again, her eyes filling perilously, helplessly. In that flashing gaze he saw himself forgiven, and blessed. He took her in his arms.

"But you must tell me something first," she said some moments later, when they had settled everything.

"How much I love you?" He shook his head, with a smile. "I can't."

"No, no. This is something serious."

"Ah!" returned he, prolonging the intonation.

"Oh, you know what I mean," she cried, answering the laughing look in his eyes. "This is a different kind of seriousness. I want to ask you something."

"Well?" inquired he, trying to be as sober as the occasion appeared to demand.

"How much did my father have to do with—with what you did?"

It was a dangerous moment. He temporized, as was his habit. "How—your father?" he asked. "I don't understand, Dorothy."

"Oh, yes, you do. I know that he had something to do with it. He has owned that to me. It is shameful; but I must ask you. I can't let you go on, I can't go on myself, not knowing what his actual share was in—in what you did."

"But you have forgiven me. What difference can anything else make?"

"Does it make no difference if he really did what I have been accusing you of—and did it without even the courage to do it for himself? Does it make no difference if he did it, in fact, and chose you—*you*, Philip, to do it for him: that it's his wrong and that he's let me make you suffer for it? No, if that's true, we have wronged you too deeply. I could n't—"

"Don't say it, Dorothy! You are mad. The wrong, whatever it was, was all mine."

"My father profited by it. You found a large sum for him. I know that. How can I know that he did not instigate it?" she asked desperately.

He did not answer for a moment. He felt himself halted. For a single instant he felt a kind of impatience stealing upon his easy-going nature; but surely he could grant her this last barrier against full and actual surrender, this little withholding of herself from him. She doubtless took it for a sincere objection. The reflection lent him a patience which taught him a defence stronger in its weakness than any other could have been in its strength. "Rubbish, Dorothy!" he said. "Rubbish! No one had anything to do with what I did, except myself—unless it was some devil in me. Your father was entirely outside of the matter, and the money

you are thinking of was paid back to Jasper long ago."

"Oh, was it? I am so glad!"

"Well, I was glad to pay it," he rejoined soberly. He heaved a deep sigh of relief as she turned away, and forgave himself for so much of untruth as there was in his statement about her father's complicity, as he caught sight of the glad smile on her face, and remembered how hard it would be to say exactly what the truth was about that. He knew that she could not always rest content with this; but for the moment it served, and if it came to another moment he hoped to be strong enough for it.

"He must pay you," she said.

"Who?"

"Papa. It is his debt. Doubly his."

"Of course," assented Philip unfalteringly, turning the sharp corner with the quick command of resource which this conversation was teaching him. "I have his notes: he is to pay me interest on them, and take them up as fast as he has the money." He said this without smiling, though a humorous memory of a long list of such arrangements made by himself on his own behalf mingled in his mind with the

absurdity of the idea that Maurice would redeem his obligations. "It is simply transferring a debt from a hard creditor to an easy one," he said.

She wondered if he did not see how this, which looked so innocent in his phrase, had involved her—how the transaction had simply used her: how she had been bandied about in it by her father like a negotiable security. She did not blame Philip for his share in it; she felt sure—too sure—of the absolute generosity of his motives; but she turned scarlet with a new sense of shame for her father.

"And you will let him pay you?"

His candid, good-natured eyes did not quail, as she clung on him studying his face.

"Let him! I'll sue him if you like!" retorted he fondly. And it occurred to him that this might not be from every point of view an event without its rewards. The talk which he had had with Maurice before coming on to her had made several things plain to him; none of them increased his fondness for Maurice.

Dorothy had to laugh. "You need n't do that," she said. They turned their faces toward Colorado Springs, and walked on through the rock-strewn park—as empty at this

hour as that other park in which they had lately parted so definitely, so finally. They found a number of things to say to each other which it would not be fair to repeat. Philip led his horse with his arm through the bridle, and Dorothy retraced by his side the steps she had lately taken alone.

The shining of the sun had seemed very good to her a few moments before ; but it was a dull radiance compared to that which fell upon them as they walked together—walking, as she felt, into a new life, into an unexplored but happy future, into a future made up out of the most airy but the most substantial materials : a future guided and guarded by love.

She told him that she knew she could not guess how she had made him suffer ; but if anything could teach her it would be her own suffering in giving him that pain. It was foolish to talk of that ; but how were they to be properly happy if they did not let themselves remember a time when they had n't been ?

But they were, in fact, too happy in having found each other again by any means to study very minutely the process by which they had re-discovered that they were necessary to each other. Only Philip must sometimes say, for mere uneasiness in his restoration to her trust,

"You 'd better say again that you forgive me. Or perhaps you 'd better say you don't. If you say you do, it makes me happy of course; but that is n't the point. You 'd better harden your heart for your own sake."

She merely smiled at him.

"Dorothy," he went on more seriously, "I'm really all that you thought me. Your pardon is heaven to me; one must have known the other thing to know the sweetness of your trust; but I must n't abuse it. I did exactly what you said: I took the 'Little Cipher' from Jasper knowing it to be his by all the laws that make right, right, and wrong, wrong for men anywhere; and I saw long ago how it was all you said and more than you said as it touched you and me and our love. You 'd better take back your forgiveness."

She shook her head. "I can't take back what I never gave. If I were to forgive you, I should have to judge first; and "— with a little lift of her eyes—"I can't judge you, Philip— any more." And then, in a moment, to turn him from this difficult subject, "How did you leave your father?" she asked.

"Ah, it's to *him* I owe you!" he cried. "He never said it; he merely brought me your message. But I know it well enough. It's from him you've taken a picturesque version

of the facts which enables you to think well of me. If you had known him, Dorothy, you would have been on your guard ; you would have understood that he never sees quite straight ; he sees too heartily, too warmly and too hot-headedly to be a safe witness—especially where he cares. He cares so much—that splendid, downright father of mine!"

"Oh, he's good ! I have been so sorry for him. It was being sorry for him that first helped me to be a little sorry for you, you know."

"Yes, I know," he answered vaguely to her roguish smile, rather than to her words (it is difficult to confine one's replies altogether to the theme of actual discourse in these situations ; there are interruptions). He added in a moment, "You couldn't have minded about me for any one else's sake so safely. It is always safe to do a thing because you like father."

"Oh, I don't know for whose sake I sent that message," she declared ambiguously. She flashed a look at him, and challenged his smile with, "I didn't say it was for yours."

"No," laughed Philip.

"No ; I think it was for my own," she assured herself. "I wanted to make sure that I had been right!"

She joined in his smile. "Well, you're sure now," he said.

"Am I? But now you see I don't know whether I am right to be sure." They could laugh at anything and they laughed at this.

"That you were wrong?" queried he. "No, I shouldn't like you to be sure of that. You were altogether in the right, Dorothy," he told her more seriously. "Your only mistake is in pardoning me. Take it back while there is time!"

"I'll see about it," rejoined she with a baffling glance at him which temporarily put an end to the discussion. "But how did you find us? How did you know where we were?" she asked suddenly, as she disengaged herself. This simple question had not occurred to either of them hitherto.

"Why, I didn't find you exactly; I partly stumbled on you. But the finding, such as it was, is Vertner's. His acquaintance with the whole fraternity of railway conductors was a blessing for once. One of them remembered that you had travelled with him this far. After that I had to hunt you up,—or rather your father, and he sent me on."

"It wasn't fair of the conductor to tell," she remarked.

"No," said Philip, with equal seriousness, "that's what I thought."

Nonsense like this floated on the current of their mood, and they welcomed it as a defence against more serious things. There was so much to be said between them that by a common impulse they avoided trying to say any of it, except as they said it in the interchange of silent glances. They seemed to themselves to have plenty of time before them: they best realized their happiness for the moment through a sense of the leisure which allowed them to feel that they could play with it.

Long silences fell between them, and they would walk on, hearing no sound but their own footsteps, and those of the horse following them; and at these times they let the sunshine, the gay, brisk, bright morning, which seemed made for them, and the massive beauty of the park, express their bliss for them in their various voices. But they had to talk, too, and they spoke a good deal, in a fragmentary, unserious way, of their future; they speculated luxuriously about it, they made and unmade plans, they warned each other affectionately that neither must build too much on the virtue and solidity of the other's character in scheming this life together. But they said they would be constant and that must be their sure armour against all doubts and differences—the certainty that

they were all in all to each other. They owned soberly the differences of character existing between them, but they agreed that it was largely these which had drawn them together, and they promised each other to respect them always, if for no other reason; they said that they should rejoice in them.

Philip told her that he should not even be jealous of her having all the sense in the family; every one had been telling him, since he had been old enough to make mistakes, that what he needed was a "balance-wheel"; he should have one now, and nothing could be more useless than a balance-wheel that kept quiet. He said he should be rid, now, of the left-handed compliment that he had excellent "works," but no contrivance for keeping them in running order, and making them perform their functions. It appeared that their functions would be brilliant if the lack were supplied. Now they should see! If they were n't it would be her fault.

"Oh, I sha'n't be strict with you, if that's what you are hoping for," she declared. "I've had enough of that."

"But I have n't. It's the only thing for me. I shall never be of any use without it. And you must remember I 've got to earn our living. When you see that, perhaps sternness will come easier to you."

"I don't know. Shall I never have a holiday?"

"Well, you 'll have to spend a good deal of your time forgiving me for the daily assortment of folly and recklessness. You might lay off for that."

"Ah, that's all very well. But, as Mr. Vertner says, 'Where do I come in?'"

"Dear old Vertner!" exclaimed Philip in the overflow of his liking for the world. "What a first-rate, unprincipled, warm-hearted, loyal good fellow he is! He wouldn't like your not coming in handsomely. But where don't you come in? I don't see but you 've got your work cut out for you."

"My work—yes! But my pleasure. How about that? If I 'm to spend all my time correcting your faults, how shall I ever find a moment to enjoy them."

"Enjoy them?"

"Well, of course I like them. How should I like you if I didn't?"

"Yes," admitted Philip, meditatively, "they do cover most of the territory in sight."

She laid a silencing hand on his lips. "Hush!" she said. "It is I who am all faults. You will find it all you can do to get along with me."

He stopped short in the road along which they were going, and took her in his arms. He looked down into her face for a long moment tenderly.

"I'll risk it!" he said.

CHAPTER XIV

"Well, that's over!" exclaimed Vertner, as he opened the door of their house for his wife, one afternoon a month later, and followed her in. "I must say I don't feel like coming back home and settling down to the old humdrum routine after an event like this. Can't we have some champagne?"

"In the middle of the afternoon?"

"No, I suppose not. But I feel the need of some excitement. Perhaps we have reached the climax, though. They looked very happy going away, didn't they?"

Beatrice seated herself provisionally in her wedding finery, stooping first to pick up one of Edward's toys from the floor. They had drifted into the room in which Margaret had borne to see Deed go from her in anger on another wedding day. The iron pyrites still winked from

the "what-not"; the Navajo blanket continued to do duty as a *portière;* the rag carpet was on the floor, the stained glass window, through which the sun was shining at the moment, continued to take itself without seriousness.

"Yes," said Beatrice, smoothing her silk thoughtfully, with long, ruminating fingers, "they did look very happy going away. Do you suppose they will be able to keep it up?"

Vertner hovered restlessly about, without sitting down. "What makes you think they won't?" he asked.

"I didn't say they wouldn't. I was only wondering."

Vertner sighed and gave an absent touch to the lavender tie of festal effect, which he had worn in honour of the occasion.

"It's a large field for speculation—any marriage," he said. "Perhaps this is a little extra large. But then they're both extra nice. I guess it will go."

"You wouldn't say that——?" began Beatrice doubtfully.

"Yes, I would. There are a lot of things of that kind that I could say; but there are answers to all of them. Yes," he repeated meditatively, after a moment, "all of

them. You see they are interested in each other. They won't get tired of each other's conversation right away, and by the time they begin to,—well, I shouldn't wonder if Dorothy were a little older."

"Oh!" gasped Mrs. Vertner, as if she had been surprised in a covert thought. "Do you think that, too, Ned?"

"I *have* thought it; but only at moments. In the other moments,——"

"Well?"

"I've thought that Phil might be something of a trial to a woman at any age."

"I don't believe you think any such thing," declared his wife promptly. "Why, there's something almost likeable even about his faults."

"Yes. Have you noticed that is what every one says? I say it myself, and I stick to it. But hasn't it occurred to you that in some situations—like a wife's, for example—a man's faults can't be the perennial joy that they are to an impartial outsider like you, who doesn't have to breakfast with them?"

"Oh, I know, Ned. But Philip is so good!"

"Ah, now you've hit it! He's a good fellow: that's exactly what he is—the best! And if his need to be a good fellow sometimes makes him a good fellow at some one else's expense, why that's only what you mean by his faults being likeable. If he has the sense to avoid being some time or other a good fellow at his wife's expense—or what she will think her expense: that's the real trouble—I don't see why she shouldn't continue to admire him for the manly and charming fellow he is, to the end of the chapter. She starts in with one great advantage: she is acquainted with him."

"And with another," added the practical Beatrice, "—— that they are not to live with her father."

"Yes; that's almost the pleasantest thing about the marriage—that it sets her free of her father." He seated himself in the chair before the fire where he sat in the evenings to read the Denver papers, and, after piling on a couple of logs, stretched out his feet cosily to the crackling blaze. "I don't see any harm in his new field of labour being $60 or $70 to the Eastward. I should n't be sorry to see the fare raised—if I could always be sure of a pass. I believe you 'll see great changes in her: she will be just

as nice, but differently nice. Come to think of it she will *have* to be rather nice to really be worthy of Phil. That little piece of business of his at Piñon just before his father found him, and he went down to Colorado Springs to look her up, is the kind of thing that might help a woman to like him exclusively for his virtues—if she knew about it."

"You mean his selling the 'Pay Ore' to pay Jasper back $5,000 when he found that those Ryan people had opened a paying vein in his own mine? Yes, that was strong in him."

"Strong! Well, if you'd ever opened a true fissure vein that showed all the symptoms of making an income of $3,000 a month for you, for four or five years to come, and had sold your claim to raise ready money, you would think it strong. It's the sort of thing to make any one who ever owned a mine think Phil about right. When I remember that, I have to believe that if they are not happy it will be her fault. Think of the rascal never having told her about it!"

"Oh, I shouldn't wonder if she had a good many things to learn."

"About her father—yes. But she'll never learn them from him. And Maurice's being so far away will prevent

the question from coming up, I hope, for her sake. Talk about apropos ity!"—this was one of Vertner's words—"what do you say to Maurice finding that position in New York! I always said he had a manner. Now, he's found a place where he can use it. To be assistant rector of a fashionable city congregation, where the people demand a certain distinction, and don't haggle too much about the salary they give for it, or the sincerity they get back for it, is a position in which Maurice can't help shining if he tries. A place like that, where too much earnestness would imply a criticism on the congregation and be in a man's way, would have been a great thing for him if it had come to him younger; he might never have found himself out. And even as it is—(if he can keep the place—if this story does n't rise to plague him), imagine his parish visits! He will raise them to the dignity of a career. And how he *will* manage the music!"

"I don't care," said Beatrice, coming over and standing near him by the fire, with her elbow on the mantel. "I'm sorry for him. Did you see him this afternoon, after the service, when Dorothy said goodbye to him in the vestry? He really cares for her; I shall always say that for him."

"Oh, don't tell me that he has his good points," retorted Vertner, rising. "I'm his consistent admirer. Have n't I praised him since the first day I saw him? I hope I know what is due to an editor who has had the discretion to relieve me of an inconvenient reputation, and does n't mind leaving his money in the business."

"I wish you'd give up that wretched paper, Ned!"

"Why, the Salvation Army people were around yesterday suggesting that very idea. I think I will."

"Yes; I suppose they are afraid of its influence," said Beatrice.

Her husband stared at her for a moment; then he snatched her down upon his knee with a howl of delight.

"Yes; that's it," he agreed. "They are frightened at the way I'm spreading churchly ideas among my two hundred and thirty-four subscribers. They want to buy me off!"

"No, but seriously, Ned?"

"Well, they want a paper of their own, under another name, and they see that the *Kalendar* has the plant, and all that ready for them. They heard that I knew when I had had enough, and they made me an offer."

"And you've accepted it?"

"Yes; at a loss of a hundred thousand dollars."

"Absurd!"

"Didn't I expect to make that out of the paper when I started it?"

"I suppose so," admitted Beatrice with a smile.

"Well, then!" challenged her husband. "And that isn't the only thing I've lost, either. I've lost my confidence in human nature. I supposed you could *give* people anything."

"And can't you?"

"Not the *Kalendar*, with Rev. George Maurice as editor. Heigho! I was sorry Deed was so cold to him."

"Oh, I think he feels very sore about Mr. Maurice's connection with what Philip did—with that matter of Jasper's mine."

"Don't call it Jasper's mine, please, Trix."

"But what shall I call it? It *is* his mine, isn't it?"

"Well, it's become so—by a fluke; but it isn't ladylike to press the point."

He regarded her with a quizzical smile, and Beatrice burst into a little rejoicing laugh. "You are trying to set me a standard for Dorothy's behaviour, I think," she said.

"If she falls below the standard I shall punish you for

it. I don't mind letting you know that. Well, I don't care," he declared warmly, after a moment. "It would be mean to take a man back, and forgive him handsomely, and persuade him that there was a new deal, and then to twit him at appropriate moments about the old hand, in the face of it."

"Of course it would," assented Beatrice with equal warmth, "but Dorothy isn't like that."

"No; women are," returned Vertner reflectively; "but probably Dorothy is n't. It's really a kind of generosity that has made her hard with him, when you come to think of it; I should n't wonder if she knew how to be at least as generous in forgiving as in condemning. I guess we can trust her. But it would be a temptation for some women—living next door to the subject of discussion."

"Yes, yes, Ned, but you will see. To Dorothy that mine in sight from her door will be like a sacred pledge—a guarantee, if you can think she needs one. His having done that—his having sold the mine to meet that debt to Jasper, and then having taken the position of superintendent of his own mine under the new owners——"

"Yes, it does rather force her to cast a benevolent eye

on the 'Little Cipher' as a part of the view from their cabin window. But it will make it embarrassing for Jasper if he should want to look after the 'Little Cipher' himself when the Ryans' lease is up, won't it?"

"Oh, Jasper!" exclaimed Beatrice impatiently, "I don't care about Jasper!" She drew off her long white wedding gloves, and, rising from his knee, began slowly to smooth them out upon the mantel.

"Ah!" exclaimed her husband from the window, "that's the limitation of your sex—your not caring about Jasper. You have to like people to be interested in them. Where's your miscellaneous human interest?" he asked, turning upon her.

"It is n't centred in Jasper," replied Beatrice with a smile.

"Do you mean to say that the spectacle of that successful young man's first defeat does n't move you?"

"Oh, I enjoyed *that* on Mr. Deed's account!"

"I should hope you did! If I were Deed and had a friend who did n't enjoy that up to the hilt, I'd disown him. It was sublime."

"It was effective," admitted Beatrice.

"Effective? It was a ten-strike. It bowled Jasper out.

And it was the only thing that could have done it. At a casual glance—that is to say, at a fool glance—it looks weak. When you come to your senses you see how weak it was. If I had enough of that sort of weakness I 'd take a contract to twist the earth backwards!"

"You need n't do that, Ned, to prove that Mr. Deed did the best and bravest thing. I'm ready enough to admit that anything that humiliates Jasper as much as that must have a good deal of some kind of force."

"Ah yes," cried Vertner, in sober joy; "it did weary him, did n't it! Taken with Dorothy's dismissal, it seems as if it might also save you the trouble of disliking him. My word for it, he is disliking himself."

"And yet he has the ranch back; he is to have it under his sole charge for the rest of the partnership term;—he has all that he has claimed."

"Yes, yes," assented Vertner heartily, with emphatic nods of his small, shrewd, blonde head; "that's just the pesky part of it. He was safe against every chance but that; and if it had happened to be anybody but Deed, he would have been safer against that chance than any. But it did happen to be Deed, you see. Jasper had a perfect position. The

incalculable has happened and left him with no position at all. It makes the poor fellow feel foolish."

"But I don't believe that was Mr. Deed's object."

"No, and that's the other pretty and excellent point about it. He has accomplished exactly what he has been after from the beginning, by giving it up and turning his back on it."

"Yes, I suppose he has won, as we should say. But now he does n't seem to care. He seems to have got past that."

"Ah," cried Vertner, as he seated himself in his chair before the fire, and held out his hands contentedly to the blaze, "that *is* winning! It's a good thing to win. But I shouldn't wonder if the best thing was not to need to win."

THE END

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